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WOMAN THINKS*



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HARRIS*

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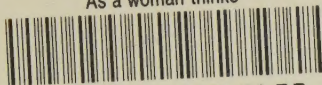
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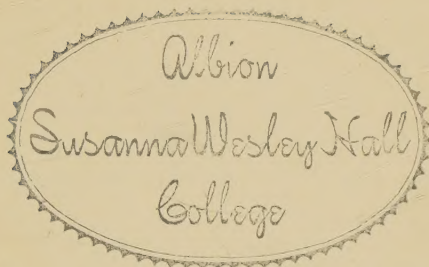
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THERE IS A SPEECH IN THE WIND THAT WE DO NOT KNOW, A
HEROISM IN NATURE THAT WE DO NOT COMPREHEND

AS A WOMAN THINKS

BY
CORRA HARRIS

Author of "My Book and Heart"



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTORY	3
II. WHEN I WAS A CHILD	10
III. CHILDREN FROM THE CABIN	17
IV. FEARSOME THOUGHTS	20
V. GREEN-GROWING SCRIPTURES	25
VI. FATHER AND MOTHER	31
VII. MY MOTHER'S GOD	38
VIII. BOOK LEARNING	41
IX. SCHOOL DAYS	47
X. WHAT I READ	52
XI. THE TEACHER I HAD	56
XII. THE 'REBEL'S' CHILD	60
XIII. NEW ENGLAND AND THE SOUTH	64
XIV. CERTAIN LIES	68
XV. REPUTATION	72
XVI. 'BEAUTIFUL AND PRECIOUS'	75
XVII. THE WORKING OF LOVE	78
XVIII. VENTURES IN SCRIPTURES	82
XIX. THE WISDOM OF THE WORD	90
XX. CONFESSION AND THE CHURCH	96
XXI. LUNDY AND I WALK AND TALK	99
XXII. WE CONSIDER GREEK CULTURE	105
XXIII. THE YEAR IN OXFORD	110
XXIV. HOMELY PLEASURE	118

XXV. LOVE AND AUTHORSHIP	122
XXVI. THE MIND OF THE WRITER	126
XXVII. DO YOU WANT TO WRITE?	132
XXVIII. EXPRESSING ONE'S SELF	138
XXIX. SITTING IN THE PUBLIC EYE	142
XXX. ON LAYING DOWN YOUR LIFE	149
XXXI. YOU MAKE YOURSELF	156
XXXII. THE LADY POLITICIAN	166
XXXIII. LIVING IN A BOOK	172
XXXIV. HAPPINESS	178
XXXV. THE LATTER DAYS	186
XXXVI. WHY WORSHIP EUROPE?	198
XXXVII. THE COUNTRY AND THE TOWN	202
XXXVIII. GARDEN HAPPINESS	207
XXXIX. WAR	220
XL. WIDOWHOOD	228
XLI. ALL SORTS OF MEN	237
XLII. VARIOUS TYPES OF WOMEN	247
XLIII. MERE MIND	256
XLIV. ISN'T LIFE EXCITING ENOUGH?	263
XLV. AS WE SEEM TO OTHERS	270
XLVI. FITTING INTO LIFE	284
XLVII. FACTS AND TRUTHS	290
XLVIII. BOOKS: MY OWN AND OTHERS	294
XLIX. CHANGE AND CONFUSION	304
L. CAN WE BE HAPPY?	309

AS A WOMAN THINKS

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I

INTRODUCTORY

THIS is not a mystical tale, nor a literary interpretation of addled-egg metaphysics. The mind I have has always been laid off sensibly according to the latitudes and longitudes of actual experiences in this present world. I never had an aura, nor the least confidence in the existence of an oversoul. This phrase is the name of a subliminal hysteria, pardonable in poets, but not in prose people with ordinary midget souls. The one I have is no part of the common spiritual vestment. On the contrary, it is an astounding fact too intimately connected with my private consciousness to be exploited in a book, or a street car, or any other public conveyance. I may draw rings around it at a respectful distance before this record ends; I may speculate prudently on souls in general, as one does in futures sometimes; but I shall not risk the presumption of phonographing our immortal part. It is offensive.

The mind is different. This is something no man will deny having, although he may deny his soul. Even if he is pathetically limited mentally, he is the enthusiastic autobiographer of what he thinks. If he has no character, and no energy to achieve, he is the more likely to be the historian, the dramatist,

poet and prophet of his mind. He cannot retain it. I have sometimes thought this explains how we came by that safety valve called language. If we should suffer a total aphasia of words, I suppose the human species would explode. The mind develops so much more power in thinking than we can possibly achieve in action.

And to the last, the minds of other men, their secret thoughts, the motives from which their actions spring remain the most interesting things we can find out.

What follows is such a biography; not an analysis, nor a confession, but the drama I have lived in thinking and believing; how the mind I have, determined my conduct, courage, cowardice, and literally created the life I have lived in spite of everything.

This is no vast undertaking like following the trail of a great intellect. I am incapable of measuring the convolutions of such a brain, say, as Herbert Spencer's. In any case the record would be scientific, not interesting. These people are born bright, but drab, humanly speaking. I am not opposed to them, you understand; they have their place somewhere over our heads, but not in the common life we lead. My justification in choosing a simpler mind to exploit is that most of us have this kind. We have actual experience in living our thoughts; and the way we do it tears mere philosophy to shreds, no matter how well and logically it has been thought out.

If you are writing the life of a prime minister, you begin by laying the scenes in the times in which he lived. You must set down the kind of king he served,

discuss the people and problems that engaged his attention and made him a great man. I am recording the history of a mind as far removed as possible from the grandeur of kings and the policies of prime ministers. But like these more pretentious biographers, I am drawing my scenes in the right place, giving you a glimpse of the summer-minded, slip-shod gentlemen who traveled this road, mismanaged their bankrupt fortunes with such humor and courage, because these are my people. There is a fine rich pigment in the quality of these people which imparts that first clear color to the mind, and may account for the bright loom of thought upon which I spun the days of my life with some wit, a certain dexterous sweetness and an awful strength of hope never justified by the facts.

I do not know how it may be with others who have outgrown themselves and become merely the residents of culture and learning, but I experience a sensation of uneasiness when conversing with a man who evades his own personal pronoun. I always change my seat as soon as possible, because he is concealing some one who should be present and apparent if he is talking.

He will never say 'I think,' 'I believe,' or 'I know,' but he will begin with 'It is said.' This may be a scholarly affectation of self-effacement, for all I know, but it is neither natural nor sincere.

We are every one born in the first person singular. We live and die feeling that way. Therefore the pronoun 'I' is the most honest and revealing word in the English language. It is our obligatory oral signa-

ture. It is not an egotistical part of speech, unless you are an egotist, but the born-and-bred name by which every man calls himself. Without this provision, you may say, of nature in him, we should never be able to identify him or know whether he is talking his own truth or his own lies or quoting them from some one else.

This is the reason why certain of my books are written in the first person. They must be. It is my way of writing as other people feel, interpretative. I am being confidential, not boastful, except possibly where we may boast together. I am telling experience common to us as human beings and giving the reader the advantage of keeping his own silence.

The method works. It encourages many to give tongue to their lives and feelings, which is a relief if they have held them in for a long time and never expected to see them said anywhere. Just write the truth of your own heart and you will find out how many men and women have lived that same truth more valiantly than you have without emitting it into copy! I have had to make that humbling revision of my attributes since the publication of 'My Book and Heart.' These silent ones who write letters not for publication have found in this volume the witness of their own hearts, a record more intimate and personal to them than if it had been written in the third person, or of one already dead and subject in the very nature of the case to biographical speculations.

The record I am now writing will have no such effect, though it may be equally veracious, because we

are further apart in our thoughts than we ever are in our feelings. We may talk much or little, but most of our thinking is done and kept in silence. The human mind is a queer thing. It has more ways of the wild creatures than we have. It never ceases to circle either upon the wing or to prowl in that secret darkness which conceals every man's mind. It goes off and comes back laden with strange thoughts while you sit gazing with candid eyes into the candid eyes of your companion, whose mind has also been out scouting around and has returned without ever meeting your mind on the way.

I suppose many a man, seated in the possessive case beside some woman, who has a Spencerian countenance and speaks to him in pale blue language of sweetness, would leap for his life if he could see so much as the flash of the thought she is whetting in her neat little head against his peace and happiness. And sometimes if a woman had a look into the mind of her hero she might become an idol breaker in the twinkling of an eye.

But we are not to be judged by what goes on in our minds. One never gets cut in a word or a deed. If all the tools of vengeance forged there were used, this world would be a terrible place. If all the dark thoughts we have were spoken, no man or woman would trust us. But these are the mental vaporings of our lower and meaner natures, conquered in most of us by the moral sense we have acquired which has established better standards.

A wise man can record all he knows of life in one book; but the scriptures of the common man require

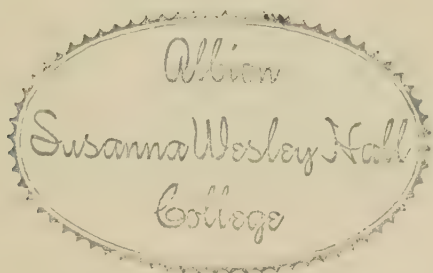
two books, and maybe a few gospels, as a sort of quotient in the long division of living. For us there would be the book of the heart, where we keep memories, the hopes that failed, our loves and hates, and whatever Beatitude we needed to comfort or praise us, whether it is a friend, a woman, or a bit of the Word. Your wise man takes no account of this copy. In his analysis of the phenomenon of man, the heart is a figure of speech which refers to the reflex action of the emotions. Then there is for us the other record of the mind, quite distinct. It is the place where we keep the law, or break it; the motives which stimulate and control us, and determine our relations to other men — and to God, who we think made us.

This last notion, in my opinion, is a gross exaggeration of the functions of the Almighty. He made what we call mind and we use it to create ourselves. It works one way in this generation and another way in the next generation. Sometimes it is war; then it is religion, art, one kind of science or another; or it may be a magnificent covetousness, practiced under such terms as industrialism, commercialism, or even the League of Nations — always filled with eleemosynary impulses, for conscience' sake, according to that very shrewd mind he is developing. It is really the sand-pile where the ostrich of him hides its head. It is at last that thing in us which is as easily degraded by a false belief as by the meanest vice. It can exalt a heathen and trap a Christian saint. It is the way of life we choose, right or wrong.

If some one laid his mind on the table, so to speak,

not as a confession, nor even as a defense, but as a certified human document, it might cast a flicker of light upon dark corners to be turned in the lives of other people. So if I show what a dim thing it was in the beginning, how a child divines peace and happiness without thinking, what a terror thinking became afterwards, how bravely and adventurously my mind guided me, how cunningly it misguided me, what burdensome rewards it earned for me, and what dividends in peace I have lost by following the best Scriptures according to my mind — some of you who read this record may get a hint to watch the thing and control it more wisely than I have controlled mine.

What I shall write will be sown with errors from the point of view of a psychologist, which will be proof to you that it is a veracious record. There may be laws governing mind; but if so, they are like so many other laws we cannot keep and survive. A logical sentence in thinking according to the exigencies of living is bound to be a very short sentence. The longer ones that last through the days of our years contradict much wisdom and a good many Scriptures. But we do get through, and looking back we do see the Word still standing, not changed.



II

WHEN I WAS A CHILD

IN the year 1874 there was a road which crossed the State of Georgia. It has disappeared long since, changed by the will of some memory in the hearts of the people. But you may trace it still when the daisies bloom in May. These flowers are not indigenous to this section. Their first seed fell here from the provender fed to Sherman's cavalry. So, in May, that month of Decoration Days, they bloom again like a long, narrow memorial wreath laid upon the grave of a dead and glorious past. They wind and turn and tumble down many a steep hillside in North Georgia, as this road made its tortuous way among these hills. But when it slipped into the lower, smoother land, it straightened out and lay like a broad red-and-golden ribbon between the great plantations. Farther and farther it stretched until it slid into the city of Augusta and became Green Street — so named, I suppose, because the road that made it came down into the white old town through such a fair and verdant country.

Other roads entered this highway, as smaller streams flow into a broader, swifter river. There were signposts to guide the traveler. I remember one in particular at the entrance of the old Petersburg road, because as a child it seemed to me like a very old man who had been pointing the way a long time and now leaned wearily in the direction indi-

cated. "Above a huge fist, rudely drawn, with the forefinger raised, appeared the legend:

'This is the way to Mill or Ferry,
Go, it, Traveler, Sad or Merry.'

We had sentiment in those days with a lilt to it, and a signpost was as good a place as any to publish it. We were not seeking fame. We were famous enough already. We were surfeited with the terrible distinction of having just concluded a cruel war in glorious defeat. We were some kind of magnificently irresponsible truth but lately crushed to earth, and we were rising again after the grandiloquent manner of our kind, with a beam in our eye and a song on our lips — but not prosperous! It requires more than a century for the phoenix of man to rise above the ashes of war in material things. We arose by a sort of rhythm of the spirit, unencumbered by wealth. The ascent is quicker and less expensive.

Gentlemen in rags traveled this road upon their old raw-boned horses — Don Quixotes, every one, still tilting against the windmills of a graver, saner civilization that had been thrust upon them. They were rumped, ruddy men who bore themselves with an air and never complained of their poverty after the manner of ignoble men when misfortune overtakes them. They held onto their leisure for a long time as the last asset of a lost fortune, and visited a great deal from one old ramshackle mansion to another. Their laughter was a joyous eruption. They were pedantic with a flourish. They could drop you a long quotation from Faust or Shakespeare without seem-

ing absurd or causing their victims the least embarrassment, such as we feel when a meaner man quotes a Promethean passage. They required these luminous vestments woven by great poets to adorn the qualities they had. Any one of them would have been admired as a character in a book or as the subject of a funeral oration.

The women of this period were strangely lyrical. Never again shall we see so many fine ladies rise with such grace above the inconvenience of poverty. Dressed in a chignon, a curl, and a cotton frock, they ignored all styles and remained the last word in the poetry of fashion. They had swishing silken virtues and conducted themselves after the manner of the heroine in the last chapter of Proverbs.

Eighty miles above Augusta there stood two huge gate-posts, topped with roughly hewed balls. Between them hung the old gray gate of a famous plantation. When the sun was low in the west it shone through these palings like bars of gold as if there might be nothing beyond but space and silence and brightness. Inside, there was a long avenue stretching away through the trees. Far down, there was a high green terrace; above the terrace, an ancient flower garden, bordered with boxwood and spired with the tops of juniper trees. Blossoming boughs waved like flags in the summer wind. All the spaces inside were filled with humbler flowers; phlox and lilies, violets and hyacinths made misty blue veils in the shadows. Long-soled cactus spread like green footprints upon the dark earth — the whole lonely place a wilderness of bloom left to govern itself.

Somewhere behind this garden in those days stood a little house, left over like a poor relation in adversity.

I was born there.

My recollection now is that it was a good little house, with a busy mind and a kind heart inside, where a female child would be taught the Lord's Prayer at an early age, and how to sew and knit; but it was not, you would have concluded at a glance, the cradle of genius. Very few people make provision beforehand for geniuses in their families. They are like the seed that birds scatter — liable to spring up anywhere, but never to be anticipated. For my part, I doubt if they are born at all, but produce themselves by some chance of circumstances; almost any man or woman is remotely liable to become one.

But my first memories are not of this house, nor even of my father and mother. I had that faint impression of them which grown people have of Providence, to be depended upon, but too far off in consciousness to be cultivated. My measure of relationship at this time was that father was very tall, and mother was much shorter and very slender. I was some kind of a little pinwheel of life revolving away from them.

In these earliest years I must have belonged more particularly to the vegetable kingdom. My first vivid impressions are of being in the open, not doing anything, certainly not thinking. I seem to have grown like the grass on the rim of the green terrace beyond the flower garden for a long time. Father

and mother are very sketchy. They appear now in my memory of this period at rare intervals.

I was not sufficiently acquainted with them then to be aware of their anxieties. They belonged to another world. I can barely remember father's blue gaze following me about, usually with the light of laughter in it. Mother was always busy. She had large gray eyes that caught me up with a glance, washed me like a saucer, set me down again and went on to her next deed with the swiftness of one who wore wings on her feet. This excessive energy may account for the fact that I formed no apron-string attachment to her.

The reputation I had, however, was that of being an extremely affectionate child. This only proves that any record written from memory must be incomplete. I suppose Homer omitted many important historical facts which did not rhyme with those he sang so lustily in his Iliad. Love anchored me so completely later in life, I am rather glad to think that in these first years my affections must have been like those of a busy man for his family, usually latent, but practiced with convincing charm at odd moments. I do not remember ever crying for my mother as other young children do, because I so completely believed in her. She could not forget me or forsake me. So far as I knew then, she would last forever. There was nothing, literally nothing, in my world to worry about. I was already living by faith.

This is the earliest faculty we develop. It is an enduring illusion at which the world and all the vicissitudes of life tear in vain. We replace every hope

that fails with another one. We change our standards and our creeds, but we live and die believing in something. It is a medicine we use to ease the mind. I have had so many letters lately from men and women who no longer believe in God. They have fallen over the precipice of rationalism into an awful pit of darkness. But it is perfectly apparent that any one of them would be quick to believe in a man or woman. They are the same old barnacles of faith we all are, who have lost their hold upon the good bottom, raked off by the lives they have lived or the thinking they have practiced. They are the most credulous people in the world. I never knew one who would not trust a convincing rascal. Or he will take to occultism, some spiritual nostrum, as a certain class of people prefer patent medicine for their physical ailments. What I mean is that the power to believe is born in us, and we must exercise it one way or the other, as we breathe to live.

I have a vivid recollection of the child I was then, as one might remember the person he used to be in another life, sitting on the green crown of my world, very pudgy, back hunched, fingers curled in the grass, the hair on my head sticking up like a fine bright fringe, eyes wide and quiet, fixed upon nothing in particular, the groggy little somnambulist of a bright dream.

I remember one of the illusions I had. The big gate at the end of the avenue was the end of my world. I accompanied father and mother through it at rare intervals, but my understanding was that we passed immediately into another world. I shall ex-

perience no more tremendous anticipations rising from my dust in the last day than I did then, seated in the bottom of the rickety old buggy, being drawn through the black weather-beaten portals of that gate.

Once in so often I made the journey up there alone to peep through the palings at this neighboring world. My fear was that it might have fallen off or been blown away in a high wind. Being very young and unacquainted with the other stars, I dreaded the possibility of being stuck up against one just outside our big gate; or worse still, finding nothing at all beyond it but emptiness.

There is a grandeur about total ignorance, winged with imagination. Children alone have it. They endure terrors and visions that would drive a sane person mad. They are little Saturns revolving in the incandescent rings of fancy, no substance to their thoughts, no realities in the secret world where they move and believe everything.

III

CHILDREN FROM THE CABIN

THE activities of a great plantation went on about me, but I recall none of the clamor of this business; only the ringing of the blacksmith's hammer on the anvil in the shop under the mulberry trees. The long procession of negroes sitting sidewise on their mules coming up from the fields through the deepening dusk of the evening were a part of the day I lived, like the lengthening shadows of the trees on the grass. The thin curls of smoke that began to hurry out of the tops of the chimneys from the cabins below the avenue used to hang like long lavender scarfs in the air. I remember that from the top of the terrace I could see the negro children milling and playing before these cabin doors. But I never joined them.

There was an invisible mark between me and these little black ones that must not be crossed. The intimate association between white children and negro children has been greatly exaggerated by the sentimental literature of the South written since the Civil War, to appeal, I have always thought, to the imagination of the North, where most of the reading in this country was done after that period. Southern white children of the stock from which I sprang sustained a passionately devoted relation to the old negroes, men and women, who remained attached to our families. This attachment remains unbroken to this day.

But no such ties ever existed between us and the young ones. The basis of mutual affection and confidence had been destroyed before I was born and the doom of the negro sealed, not by the Civil War, but by propaganda that followed it for fifty years. Where enmity is created, justice will never be done. But hate and distrust beget the sense of injustice, which produces every abomination possible between a strong race and a weaker one.

I have not one recollection of having played with a negro child. My only memory lasts because it was striped in with a switch. Susan, a little negro girl, came to the house one day for a pitcher of milk. I took her aside and examined her black kinky wool wrapped in white cotton thread. I did not think much of it and said so.

Mother punished me severely for this. I do not recall the words she used. They were undoubtedly stern and simple, for she had that kind of a vocabulary; but the gist of it was that the quality of a superior was that he never took advantage of an inferior, and that it was ignoble to humiliate one by referring to his natural defects, whether of hair or color. This doctrine steadfastly kept also by my father, in the end cost him a two-thousand-acre cotton plantation. For there were a hundred negroes on the place, and they took every advantage that inferiors can take of a generous superior. The only reason why it has not been equally expensive to me is that I never had so much as a plantation to lose and have dealt with fewer people of this class.

But the impression I received that day concerning

my obligations to those less fortunate by nature, as I stood tearfully diminished before mother and still stinging from the duty of her switch, has never left me. And it is now a fact, which I have proved by experience, that it is more enhancing to keep one's self-respect than to get the advantage of an inferior person in any kind of transaction. After so many years of this kind of noble prancing morally, it produces a certain insolent sense of quality, not justified, of course, by the person you really are, all told. Still, it is a grand feeling and a part of the mind I have finally rounded up out of life.

IV

FEARSOME THOUGHTS

POETRY and superstition were atmospheric conditions of the mind. As a child, I believed in ghosts, spirits, and signs. Knowledge has delivered me, but my instincts never will. I can think of no other reason why I still pass the seventh day of March warily and more innocently than I do my other days. This has been regarded as an ominous day in my family for generations, although I do not recall a single disaster that overtook any of us on this day. I am also at some pains not to see a new moon for the first time through the branches of trees, because mammy often warned me when I was a child that such an indiscretion would be followed by bad luck.

I received constant instructions from the negro servants in the primitive occult sciences, duly proved and illustrated.

There was a tiny sunken grave outlined with white flint stones on the edge of the forest behind the house. Aunt Parthenia, the old black woman who milked the cows, told me that a child had been murdered and buried there. She said the face was very pale, the hair white like wool. It was a small child about my age, and wore a long white gown. Just at dark she said it often climbed a tree and wailed piteously on account of having been murdered. Hidden in the plum bushes near the house,

I used to see this thing clinging and swinging in the top of a poplar tree that grew beside the grave. I cannot recall the features of any living person I knew then so vividly as I do the pale, pinched face of that forlorn little ghost. The hair on its head did stand out and glisten in the darkness. And my own hair stood up in delicious fright, listening to its shuddering cries. Years passed before I could believe this was a screech owl screaming.

Somewhere in this same period I met a ghost in the flower garden when I was expecting no such encounter — a crooked woman wrapped in a black shawl. I remember how stiff and ghostly white her hands were. She looked at me and I could not move. After a while mother came and led me back to the house. My legs were trembling with excitement, but I did not tell her what I had seen. I never confided any of my experiences with ghosts to her, feeling somehow that she might disapprove of them. She was particular about the company I kept.

Mother belonged to the old order of saints. She was the kind of Christian who would have died at the stake for a doctrine. She believed in infant baptism because this was one of the doctrines of her church, and made haste to have me baptized before I could hold up my head. She not only believed you must be born again, spiritually speaking, but she had her doubts about your conversion if you did not suffer the birth pangs of repentance at least with groanings and tears. I was too young to think a doubt when she instructed me in the doctrine of damnation. Hell was a very literal pit of fire and

brimstone, where the wicked burned forever and the worm never dieth. If she had not included the worm in this picture, I might not have received the reptilian idea of the place, which was particularly abhorrent. One day I met a turtle in the flower garden. The eyes were red. There were red gills under its neck. I fled shrieking, believing it to be some kind of infernal insect that had crawled out of the pit, still hot and malevolent.

At this age I must have been like those birds in the far places that do not fear or fly at the sight of man. I was never afraid of the dark, nor of the considerable number of ghosts I collected under the guidance of Aunt Parthenia.

I also believed in certain animals. The marvelous things I heard about the doings of rabbits, cats, and foxes surpass anything recorded in *Æsop's Fables*. There was a donkey on the plantation. I was shy of this beast, not because I was afraid of him, but because he might speak to me. Some native delicacy I had, forbade conversation with an ass. But if our old dog wagged his tail, I understood him. I have always been able to interpret dogs. They have no souls, no minds of their own; but if they associate intimately with human beings, and not with other dogs, they develop a telepathic relation to us that amounts to divination. They understand us and act according to our will and mood, however secret, because they worship us.

I have had fearful thoughts along this line. What if we sustain a similar relation to the Almighty? What if we are simply the tail-wagging medium of

infinite mind? Such speculations are no doubt of the devil, but if you have a mind you cannot resist now and then taking an intellectual whiff at your powers and principalities of darkness.

Negroes do not include fairies among their superstitions; so I was deprived of the lighter, happier comradeship of these gossamer-winged beings. My impression is that they do not last so long, nor are they so sternly stimulating to the imagination as the illusions we have of spirits and ghosts. Even a child discards his fairies at an early age, but mankind never quite escapes the prescience of the supernatural. Wise men as well as fools have been haunted by these uneasy figments. All literature from beginning to end is populated with ghosts and apparitions of the dead. This is testimony accumulated, not about the supernatural, but about what we are. The Lord knew us. This is the reason why heavenly messengers were seen by the naked eye in the Scriptures. Something imprisoned in us responds to that 'cloud of witnesses,' and to the Holy Ghost of Jesus Christ. We require such symbolism because we are forever and inalienably kin to spirits. But we never see them.

During the whole of my life I have been subject to these visions. I have had a curious consciousness of not being alone when I was really alone. I have seen a whiteness take shape in impenetrable darkness, heard sounds, had a sense of wings and motion about me in silence and stillness. Maybe this is merely the blind stirring of immortal instinct; but my suspicion is that these 'presences' we feel, or think we see, are

freaks of memory, subconsciously aroused by the loves or hates we used to have, and that any one with a lively imagination can get himself haunted or blessed by these illusions. I think it is an exercise in supernatural lying which never fully convinces a rational person; therefore, a dangerous diversion to indulge, and bad for the soul. The practice of spiritualism seems to me gross and strangely repulsive, like some kind of abnormal vulgarity. Compare the noble significance of that 'cloud of witnesses' mentioned in the Scriptures with the 'spirit' conjured up at a psychic séance. The first is designed to inspire faith and courage; the latter merely gratifies your human anxiety or curiosity by informing you that your maiden aunt who died last spring is well and happy!

We must learn; it is inevitable. The time comes when we can no longer avoid the facts accumulated by human experience. I would not go so far as to call this wisdom; much of it is based upon errors of judgment, weakness, and prejudice, but we must master as much of it as possible in order to live sensibly in an erroneous world.

I come now to this momentous period in my own life when the amorphous but still entrancingly immortal faculties I had must be adjusted, according to the mortal mind, to God and man. This is a flighty business when you consider the strange contradictions involved.

V

GREEN-GROWING SCRIPTURES

FATHER was sensitive to the sublime. The calm mind of the heavens on a clear starlit night could move him to the noblest flights of imagination. He must stretch himself mentally and let out a spark of eloquence or prophecy; it made no difference so long as he relieved the pressure of infinities upon his strident soul.

He had a habit, when I was this very small child, of pacing back and forth in the warm moonlit darkness of summer evenings. I recall myself like a caterpillar sticking to him there. With one bare foot placed upon the toe of each of his dusty boots and my arms clasped about his long legs, I rode backwards; still, the stride was exciting.

One night when we were traveling in this fashion beneath a particularly clear starlit sky, he halted, swung a grand gesture, peered down at me as from a great height.

'You will live to see airships up there flying like a flock of birds!' he said.

'Corra,' mother interrupted hastily from the porch, 'come in, wash your feet and go to bed!'

I obeyed, too young to suspect that she was guarding me from what was supposed to be a streak of insanity in father's family.

It seems that one of his remote ancestors had con-

ceived this same idea of flying through the heavens on his own wing power. He was humored in this hobby until the day he ascended to the roof of his mansion geared up in two huge wings of his own devising and hopped off. He survived only because they did break the force of his fall, but he spent the remaining years of his life in close confinement.

From this time forth some one in each succeeding generation of father's people had been born with this predilection for flying. Mother was determined it should not be her child in this generation. She was a sensible woman, who had a legitimate imagination and conceived only of incandescent angels being properly endowed with wings.

On the other hand, father had his anxieties. "Mother's Uncle John was an intensely religious man in an age when only preachers were distinguished for their piety in this section, and he was not a preacher. His mind was fixed on the Bible and he read no other book. Father believed he was quite mad on this subject.

I had a rather unusual memory long before I had any of the other intellectual ingredients that go to the making of a mind. When mother began to read Genesis aloud to me, my ear caught the tune of that genealogical chapter which records the generations of Adam with so many repetitions of the word begat.

One day I climbed upon father's knee and recited too many verses from this chapter to him. I should have let him have them all but for the fact that he interrupted. He exchanged a look with mother.

'Stop reading that book aloud to her. Remember your Uncle John!' he said.

Parents are strangely suspicious of what Nature may have done to their children. The first thing they do when one is born is to look him over to be sure he is made up properly, not too long or too short anywhere, and not one-sided. The mother's travail is never over until she calls out faintly, 'Doctor, is my child all right?' and receives the assurance that he is. Then she lets go and fades away into the bliss of motherhood. My parents received the best assurances about me then. Still, as I grew, strangeness of one sort and another showed up in me; then they would hark back, each behind the other, to account for it. It was not the child I was; it was what they knew about themselves which might crop out in me that disturbed them. I suppose all parents suffer from this same sense of ancestral guilt toward their offsprings.

Somewhere in another book I have set down at length the impression made upon me by the story of creation as related in Genesis. Here, following the trail of my mind rather than the emotional effects created upon the life of a child, I pass on with the bare statement that it fitted the mind I had then. And I venture to add that it still spreads amazing and veracious before the mind I have now. It is that book in the Bible most like God. In the others the record is diminished to His dealings with us. There is more room in this first one for seeing just God, is what I mean. The more you live in the open, in remote and quiet places where the evidences still

show like green-growing scriptures, the easier it is to believe. For me it will remain to the last my favorite gospel of the goodness and wonders of the Almighty. I do not know why, unless, as life, duty, and conscience pressed hard upon me, these first chapters turned out to be less obligatory than, say, the Ten Commandments. Many a time they have been like great visions in a dark place. It was like seeing original things take shape. I suppose other people have had the same experience; but in this mood the first herbs of the field have been almost visible, in their fresh greenness, through the mists of the first morning of time.

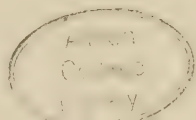
Long afterwards, when I began to write a few scriptures of my own, and must accomplish some feat of imagination to reach what I know, I used to read the first chapter of Genesis as devout Episcopalians read prayers to God from a book. I never caught the rhythm of that great moment when the light was divided from the darkness and the waters from the lands, but hearing the roll and rumble of it has certainly lengthened the stride of my mind.

I had a good deal of the Old Testament imparted to me before I received my other mental training. As far down as I can reach now into the mind I had then, I am a very small human, traveling by speculations through Deuteronomy, Judges, and believing that Second Samuel was Samuel's son. I am keeping company with the major and minor prophets. I am the little girl who knew Ruth and could see her in the wheat fields, gathering the scattered heads that fell behind the reapers. I was very much attached to her

and to David in his youth. But never to the Song of Solomon. Mother always skipped it as 'unsuitable' when she read from the Bible. She had a certain look on her face when she would be turning the leaves and came upon this Song, as if she had seen something indelicate, and invariably flitted the page over it hastily as you would cover such a thing. My impression is that she did not think very well of Solomon. To this day I share her prejudices. Too much of his wisdom is derived from the bad end of experience.

But imagine a child's mind taking shape under these influences. I was haunted by ghosts and fed on the stately Scriptures of the Old Testament. Jerusalem and Nineveh are the first cities I remember hearing about. I was particularly interested in the latter because of the deep-sea disaster which overtook Jonah on his way there. I believed everything, but not with the literal humble mind of the obedient spirit. I have always reserved the right to believe in the Scriptures intelligently. So far as I am able to judge, stupid faith is as dangerous and belittling to the soul as a false doctrine.

This story of Jonah gagged me even at that early age. And to this day I am still wondering if any one saw the whale swallow him, or if it was a mere wave that vomited him upon the shore. Not that I doubt the Scriptures, you understand, but Jonah. What I mean is that in the horror of being cast overboard and drowned, he may honestly have believed he was being swallowed by a great fish, when he was really descending into the bowels of the sea.



The instruction I had from the Old Testament marked my first definite formations mentally. They seemed, as I look back now, to have opened the casements of my mind to more gallant illusions, verified by the angels and prophets who appeared so constantly in these Scriptures. I used to strain myself to see Elijah rising in a chariot of fire. A red cloud in the sunset sky might have convinced me of the repetition of this miracle. I was a small human drop in the eternity of summer days. I had no sense of time. I felt very near the beginning of things. But I was unaffected morally. I went about my business as usual, without a scruple as to what was right or wrong.

VI

FATHER AND MOTHER

I FELT a certain silent intimacy with my father. This was due to the fact that we were both highly sensitized emotionally, but not morally. I received the impression that there was more space in father for the practices of a free spirit. It seems to me that we both avoided the house because it was such a good place, ruled by order and righteousness. Nothing could be changed in it, least of all mother, who loved us with a consuming affection. I did not know the name of the sensation at the time, but I always came into it feeling like a prodigal son. I remember some such expression on father's face shot with humor. I cannot think what we had been doing; probably nothing reprehensible; but I was full of secret stuff not to be exposed to her, because I never could tell what she would approve. Father knew and was silent for the same reason.

She was literally a religious woman. She believed in the Christian religion without tears. She could perform her spiritual duties on a cold collar and keep the Commandments without praying or fasting. I have always thought she might have been a trifle short on the Beatitudes, because she practiced them with less emotion than any other person I have ever known. She had resignation and endurance to a remarkable degree, but she was sublimely deficient in humility. My memory of her, revived by the

wit of a mature mind, is that she was admirably conscious of her own worth and standing before the Lord, though I never heard her testify in an experience meeting, which was one of the pious diversions of saints in those days.

Father was spiritually minded, but only intermittently religious, during which periods he far outstripped mother in the bloom and beauty of his virtues. But he frequently fell back into original sin, where he seemed to belong; but was never comfortable, poor soul. He would invariably rise by the means of the most spectacular repentance. I have observed that these acrobatic souls belong to men with more histrionic talent than ordinary saints have. This is the reason why they are more beloved even if they are less dependable. I am certain mother loved father more than she could have loved a better man. It is the quality of goodness in women, not a weakness.

Mother used to pass into silence sometimes. She became inaccessible. No tears, going about her duties with a certain sweet quietness as if she was walking more softly before the Lord than usual and hoped this would do some good.

I still think I was right in my impressions of these periods. My feeling was that something grand was going on. I distinctly felt the presence of God everywhere. My lid came off in this mysteriously electric atmosphere. I suppose it is the same sensation formerly enjoyed by emotional people when they shouted during divine services. I hoped for some change in the methodical routine of things, and

did not get it. When the hero of the house fell from grace he disappeared. He was not. But I was quarantined by the tightening of the ligaments of all mother's virtues and obliged to practice my rectitudes more scrupulously than usual. No escape to the terrace outside. And the house felt like a church — terribly hallowed.

But when father emerged from the dark pit of his transgression, haggard with that look of noble repentance remorse imparts to the male countenance, I beheld him with awe and speechless admiration, having no knowledge of the cause of this moral grandeur or that so much eloquence covered delinquency.

I have a dim candle-lit memory of one of these scenes which took place in mother's room when I was a very small child. Glowing logs upon the hearth that cast a red radiance over the bare white boards of the floor. A candle lighted upon the candle-stand like the faintest flickering flame in this darkness. Stiff blue calico curtains drawn back from the windows and primly tied. A clear cold night outside and stars shining through the symmetrical angle of these curtains. Mother sitting in her corner, pale as peace and righteousness, hair black and smoothly coiled, skirts arranged just so. Hands folded, her large gray eyes slightly raised, very peaceful, as if she gazed upon her cross and knew she could bear it. I sat in my small split-bottomed chair, hands clasped around the arms of this chair, elbows sticking out, fair hair glowing like the fringe of innocence in this rich darkness, copper-toed shoes

shining, head barely high enough above the window-sill to see the stars.

But I was not looking at the stars. I was wearing my church manners and watching mother's face as one consults the clock when it is time for services to begin. I had been in these family altar services before and knew that one was at hand now because the big Bible lay upon the candle-stand. This Book was never opened except upon great spiritual occasions or when the pastor called. Mother dispensed her daily Scriptures from a smaller, well-worn volume.

There was a step outside, coming with a long crunching stride. The stars twinkled with that giggling sense of humor they may have acquired from watching the doings of men for so many ages. The door was thrust open. A blast of icy wind entered. The flame of the candle flickered, as if this was no place for a good little candle. I vibrated. My dear father, whom I had not seen for days, strode in, you may say, upon this blast. But I restrained my natural affections, as one does when a solemn ceremony is about to begin. Why this ceremony I did not know, but once in so often it had to be performed, because it seemed to greatly enhance father and to refresh and gladden mother.

Father was a pallid and noble figure, somewhat disheveled, like a long-legged eagle that has recently weathered a high wind. He took one sweeping glance around, caught my adoring eyes upturned, and discarded them as a bagatelle in this momentous situation. Mother merely ceased to bat her eyes, gaze still fixed upon her cross. Let the mountains

fall upon her, let the waters of all the seas roll over her, she would not be moved except by decent repentance!

Well, he must go through with it as usual, is what I know now father decided after that momentary survey, and kept his pace to the big rickety chair beside the candle-stand. He let himself down into it like a god overtaken in a fault, glanced distastefully at the Bible and emitted the sigh of a bellows. My breast heaved in suspense. I knew that my father would presently become a man of the Lord and open the Book. These were the only occasions when he was associated in my mind with our God. I coveted the experience. What I did not know was that he dreaded the blasphemy demanded of him. He had his feelings and Adam's modesty when his sin would be dying hard in him. Then some emotion would overcome him; maybe a man's grateful memories of this invincibly good woman who could not be made to forsake him. What was God's opinion of him compared to her dear wishes? Such a foolish little she demanded in exchange for all she gave. Something like this I know passed through his mind. Then he would open the Book, turn to the Psalms, taste a few until he struck one with the right note, not too revealing, something vague and nobly sung. That night he read this one:

'Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness. And enter not into judgment with thy servant.'

He was ever a man quickly moved to the left or

right in the moral world. Give him a full glass, a roistering companion, and he could race with the devil himself. Give him the noblest words of penitence and he could produce the accompanying remorseful emotions. He could shrive himself with the dignity and majesty of a saint. So now for the moment he was every whit David broken by his transgression. Grief descended upon him and shook him like a blessing:

‘Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit faileth,’ he read on woefully. ‘Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.’ And so on until he came to the end.

I did not understand, but I felt the wind of sorrow blowing from the eloquent lips of my father. I was bursting with emotion, my lips primped, my eyes fixed upon him full of tears. The one thing that restrained me was mother’s inscrutable face. She not only understood the Psalm but the man who was reading it. She simply used this method to change the scenes of his singularly adaptable spirit.

‘Let us pray,’ he rumbled in a choked voice.

I have a lively recollection of this prayer. It was a good one. Very few people have the real gift of prayer, and then only under the emotional pressure of remorse. I have heard the ring of platform oratory many a time in the prayer of a saint who had nothing but his congregation’s sins of which to repent. Father, splendidly poised on one knee, recited a psalm of his own to the Lord, not so good as David’s but along the same line. He cast his iniquities from him in sentences that clashed like bright swords.

Sobs shook him. I was also deeply moved, as I am to this day by great music of powerful prayers. Kneeling like a little rag doll, very low before my chair, I accompanied him with sounds of grief, meows of a kitten saint, decently repressed until, casting a watery glance through my fingers, I saw father wiping his face on the blue window curtains. This was too much. I keened my nose and let out a wail that steadied the great mourner and ended his petition.

VII

MY MOTHER'S GOD

I SUPPOSE there are still such husbands in the world, but I am wondering if there are any more women like mother. Maybe she would be called a pill now. Looking back, the methods she used to restore father's soul do seem drastic. She loved him with a shrewd tenderness; but let him break his traveling gait toward Heaven and she was the most adroit persecutor of the damned and fallen I have ever known. She kept a good little house not more than one short prayer path from the gates of Heaven. Everything in it was clean, white where it should be white, glistening where it should shine. If by chance an unworthy person crossed her threshold, he brought his former virtues with him and practiced them. She demanded at least a noble deceit of goodness.

This was the kind of father I had, and this was my mother. I was a sort of human hybrid composed of these two natures. Nothing could cure me of a dangerous likeness to father. I was closer kin to him in mind and spirit. I may have inherited some invincible stamina from mother, a capacity for standards and principles. My notion is that father merely begot me, and that mother continued to exercise the same functions to me morally that she did physically before I was born. She produced qualities of character in me which went far toward

determining my woman's life afterwards. She had Moses' gift for guiding me and controlling the rabble in me.

But I have never reached the promised land. Neither did the children of Israel under Moses. No one does. Your Moses is too much of a disciplinarian. Looking back now at my wilderness, it seems to me if I make the last stretch it will be upon the wings of a spirit inherited from father. But I shall never make it now. I shall pass like other people who have been anxious to be good all their lives — barely in sight of that fair and happy land. I have been encompassed about by too great a cloud of witnesses to just righteousness. The burden of being obedient to mother's God, and later on to the God of a still more drastic saint, has wearied me. I am too tired now to shout and be happy. I shall probably die up here in a high place, barely in sight of the promised land as usual.

I have often wondered how real saints feel about this. I know how they talk, but do they in their secret hearts as humans sometimes regret the hard and narrow way? Isn't there something unsatisfied in them to the last? Have they been entirely gratified? Can one ever have in this world the peace promised? Maybe we do at the last moment. I am expecting it then. But one moment, with your breath already leaving you, is a short time to enjoy what you have spent a lifetime to win.

As near as I can make out, we cannot obey the Scriptures and be as much like the Lord as we claim to be. There is too much submission, too much

bondage to sacrifice. We do not seem to have arrived yet at that almighty mental poise where we can punish as He does. Vengeance is still His. Our minds have dropped a stitch somewhere between the Ten Commandments and that beatitude which reads: 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, for my sake, . . . for great is your reward in heaven.'

We are short on giving out these rewards. Maybe we are still so vicious it would not be safe to trust us with administering justice one to another according to the Lord's way. We must go to a court and get balled up with an attorney to obtain our rights, and maybe have the decision go against us. Or we must go to a church conference and get balled up with the presiding elder and get very little satisfaction there for our wrongs compared to the way we could satisfy ourselves if it were not for sitting down dutifully and being persecuted for righteousness' sake. Maybe we should go on turning the other cheek a while longer; but my experience has been that there is very little gratification of the vanity of the human soul in turning the other cheek, or giving a man your coat also because he took your cloak. It leaves you naked, cold, and bruised in the face, and the other fellow strutting around bragging at your expense. Compare that with the way the Lord punishes evildoers and you get an inkling of what I mean — and the chief reason why I am writing this history. My mind has misled me frequently through the Scriptures.

VIII

BOOK LEARNING

IGNORANCE is a curse, but it depends upon what kind of knowledge you get whether that is not even more of a curse. For this reason I have become a bit squeamish about education. Occasionally, when I am suffering from the effects of some regrettable wisdom I have acquired, the very sight or sound of the word gives me a sinking sensation, as one feels when reminded of fate. It smacks too much of Calvinism, a willful, worldly form of predestination by which the mind, morals, and future of a youth are determined. We can teach him a lie by concealing part of the truth, knob him like a hydra-horned monster with false ideals and he has no defense. We can substitute a code of ethics for religion without letting him know that ethics is a variable and frequently very free translation we make of the will of God in the minds of men.

The product of such a system of education we have in the present generation of young people. They are being deprived of their legal relations to the Almighty. They are running true to form, predestined to their courses by what they have not been taught, obedience to that law which we older people call God. To be brought up illiterate in the spirit seems to me a frightful state of ignorance and very dangerous. I prefer real Calvinism, though I was born and bred a Methodist, because according to

that old doctrine some of us at least were elected to salvation.

Methods of education were much more primitive when I was a child. You learned your Catechism and the Ten Commandments first; then your alphabet. I knew who made the heavens and the earth, that Adam was the first man and Eve the first woman, before I was five years old; but I must have been nearly six before I could distinguish between the little *b* and the little *d* of the alphabet. They seemed very small and negligible compared with the hills and skies and trees to which I had been accustomed. I was frightfully lonely with my a, b, abs. What I spelled out by the hardest was not interesting. I had the prescience of all things and must now be turned back to learn little words in a book that I had always used in speaking. I could not be impressed when w-h-a-t turned out to be 'what.' I lacked the erudite instinct which makes scholars.

My only interest in words to-day is to find the one needed, preferably a small one; young, active, and properly colored to use for expressing that feeling which became a thought, if you can say it or write it down. I have never had the least cultural curiosity about the ancestry of a word, whether Greek or Latin or even older, though I have sometimes had the feeling that I might be using a smooth, wise word which had formerly been in the employ of Socrates. But never one accustomed to Marcus Aurelius's way of thinking — a good man as pagans go, but reduced to a negative state by the quality of his spirit.

I have often wondered if literary people as a class

show any aptitude for grammar in their youth. My suspicion is that it is chiefly those who speak correctly — you may say, from a sense of duty; not naturally, nor with any charm — who take to the drudgery of studying English composition. They are of that class who read your book, not for the taste or flavor of the story you tell, but to find a misplaced adverb or the tail of a participle sticking out in the wrong place. Meanness of mind can sink no lower than this, because it is clothed in such outrageous respectability. You cannot call him a hypocrite for directing your attention to a grammatical error on the one hundred and twenty-fifth page of your narrative; yet he is one, plucking at the mote of an outlawed word with a beam in his own eye. I never knew one who could write an interesting sentence, though a child could parse it.

The only indication I showed of literary sense from the beginning was a distaste for the study of grammar. I remember how small I was, and how desolate, being obliged to sit in the house and learn a lesson in Smith's English Grammar. And it is still a queer thing from my point of view that men have been burned at the stake for choosing their own doctrines from the Scriptures; but so far as I know, the author of a textbook designed to cower the mind of a child has never suffered martyrdom. I am not implying a disposition to thrust a blazing fagot into the beard of a professional grammarian; but it does seem strange when you think about it that no man has ever been punished for devising textbook tortures for children.

My only recollections of this book were the punishments I received because it remained a mystery to me, and the number of hard and fast rules in it that I learned but could not apply. When it was done and over with, the residuum of information left in my mind never to be forgotten was that 'Active verbs govern the objective case.' I have noticed that they do in every walk of life. In those days I developed a personal sympathy for the noun in the objective case. It was frequently knocked down and trampled upon by the noun in the nominative case. It was the victim of an active verb.

By this time I have my own ideas about the virtue and value of words. Their worth depends entirely upon the person who uses them. They betray more than the mind; they betray the man. The somnambulant charm of De Quincey's writings was due to his constant use of the passive verb. They are nearly all drugged and recumbent. There are peaks of the purest inspiration in Whitman's poetry, rough tablelands that stretch away into light and darkness, written with a rhythm of words so harsh and strong that one hears the hoarse shouts of a man with a great and joyful heart. But the lowlands of his thoughts are covered with a growth of monstrous words. My belief is that those who revere him as a poet quote him less often on this account than his ostentatious disciples who camp most frequently in the lower regions of his genius.

And there are the decadent writers who use words frequently that bloom like fair frail blossoms on a dung heap — but always a line somewhere which betrays the odor of the soil.

The reason why the minor poets are minor is because the thoughts they have can only be sung in slender, pale, poignant words. It is not beauty they express so much as frailty. Poe's tales and poetry always fascinated me, but they reveal the dipsomaniacal genius of the man.

David was shrewder than a psalmist is supposed to be when he cried out, 'Oh . . . that mine enemy had written a book!' I do not know how the theologians interpret this passage, but it is perfectly clear to me that David was no mean psychologist. No man ever wrote a book that did not betray him if you know how to read it. If he has an illiterate nature and all the words at a scholar's command, the thing he writes may be useful like a record; but it will not have the convincing charm of life. He sustains the same relation to literature that a ploughman does to a painter, an artisan to an architect — useful, but not nearly so interesting to know.

As for the mere grammar of language, it is essential if you have no ear for composing a sentence, as notes are for one who has no ear for music and must strum it as it is written for him. I am deficient there, having no skill in the harmonies of singing sounds; but I came out of ten generations of men who used words as the winds use the clouds, roughly or gently, according to the velocity of their moods. And I contend that there are some things to be said so quickly by way of interpreting a man or a meaning that if you stop long enough to reduce it to a parsing symmetry you have lost the breath of life in the truth you meant to convey.

Compared with the modern child, I was stupid. I did not know anything. I was simply a medium of sensations, experiencing joy in the sun, living confidentially with the grass, moved to this or that adventure as the wind blows. I was without self-consciousness, that first symptom of vanity in a mind beginning to be, so attractive in young children, so offensive in men and women. I was strangely lacking in the monkey curiosity peculiar to the bright child. I came silently by my own knowledge without asking questions. There was no sense in what I learned, but much enchantment. I was closer kin to the earth than mere mind ever makes us. I knew the leaves on the trees as you hear conversation, and the sky was very near, like a roof over my head.

IX

SCHOOL DAYS

I ATTENDED the old field school at broken intervals in these days. What I remember about that is the path across the hills to this school, the scent of ripe maypops in the long grass, the passion flowers blooming like lace among the corn, dew on everything; the way the gray gables of the schoolhouse showed against the sky, the little winds that accompanied me on summer days fragrant as the breath of the fields. They are like verses I learned long ago. If I need one in a cheerful tale now I always go back and copy the little a-b-c breeze that used to blow the grass into billows and turn the leaves on a certain poplar tree like a thousand tiny silver fans as we went by together.

Once when I was very young I was sent to the village school and came for the first time in contact with the bold alacrity of the children of the world, a very small world, but strange to me. They must have bragged and boasted. Anyway, for the first time I remember being troubled about my financial standing. I did not know whether my parents were rich people or poor people, but it was apparent that there was great satisfaction to be had from riches. Still, it was a delicate matter, upon which I was loath to consult mother, who seemed to be above such trivial considerations. One day when I could bear my anxiety no longer I devoted myself secretly,

like an expert accountant, to the business of estimating the worth of our estate and determining once for all the financial standing of my family. Followed such a feat of memory as rarely has been equaled since Adam named all the beasts of the field at one sitting. I forgot nothing, from father's old army shawl to the thousands of acres of land in the plantation. My scale of valuation was eccentric, but exceedingly gratifying. We were very rich people, I decided, although I doubt if I had ever seen a piece of money at this time. We had servants and land and were really poverty-stricken.

It is a good thing to be born poor with an opulent mind. Fluctuations in market values have less effect upon your strictly private fortune. Wealth is a state of mind which many a rich man misses. I have no idea how long I retained this notion of being an heiress, but I am moved to tears and laughter by the quiet assurance I had, based upon our wealth, to which I never referred. Children are very shrewd about preserving their illusions. They conceal them from the diminishing knowledge of others. I am wondering what might have happened if my young companions had suspected the source of my ease and pride. And what would have been the effect upon me if I had realized how anguishingly poor we were?

After all, it was not such a bad way to grow up — next door to the kingdom of Heaven, believing myself to be the heir of a great fortune and descended from great people.

I may have acquired some mettle of the spirit in these purely imaginary circumstances which enabled

me to bear with a better grace the vicissitudes of the direst poverty later on, for I have never felt poor. If I had a nickel in the machine drawer, I was doing very well; if my husband had a dollar in his pocket, want and anxiety were comfortably removed.

What I remember about myself during this period is different and more engaging. It seems to me that from being a shy, silent child I became a genial little girl. I remember jumping the rope at school and sharing a playhouse under the trees with another little girl. But these were diversions natural to my age, as a kitten chases its tail when not otherwise occupied. I recall much more distinctly the satisfaction with which I parted from these companions and took the lonely path home across the fields. I had the happier feeling of being very much abroad then as a bird must have on the wing in a wide space. I remember the habit I had later on of walking in the flower garden late in the evening until mother called me. I am certain that this was a kind of enchantment I practiced, for I have no recollection of thinking anything right or wrong, but only of feeling like a part of everything; not that I could have defined the sensation then.

This habit of walking alone late in the evening has remained with me. Sometimes for years it may be broken by circumstances or inevitable companionships, only to be resumed again with precisely the same somnambulant happiness I had when I was young. As near as I can tell now, it is like resting from being mortal and old and tired. It is like escaping from the weary consciousness of your own

life, narrow and familiar and full of thoughts that take hold of you like hands. Maybe it is a little Enoch period I enjoy of not being.

My first appearance on the stage was during a school commencement about this time. I was in a dialogue composed of little girls who were supposed to impersonate flowers — the rose, the violet, the lily, for example. I was the tulip. When my turn came to tell how it felt and what it meant to be a tulip, I was so deeply moved that I had to be led from the stage in tears. But I had felt the glare of the footlights in my face and craved the opportunity to appear on the stage. My desire was not to show off, but to move the audience. I had the true artistic impulse.

There was a poem written about that time purporting to be the Lament of the Empress Eugénie over the death of her son. The first line of it ran: 'Waileth a woman, "Oh, my God!"' I remember smiting a cheerful commencement audience one night with this thing, delivered in a voice which ranged from soprano to a sobbing whisper, and with gestures of the wildest grief. I suppose the poor empress conducted herself with dignity in her sorrow, but whatever she said or did, she could not have equaled my interpretation of her woe. The performance was received in petrified silence, but I still believe the audience might have cheered if it had not been so startled by the activity of my emotions.

I am probably the only person living who believes that I had histrionic ability of no mean order. But I have never regretted missing the career of a

great tragedienne, on account of the well-known perversity and stupidity of audiences. Sometimes they are elegant mobs who slay you by omitting the encore. They are the majority and hold your fate in their hands at every performance. But if you write a book, you are the silent majority. The book keeps going the rounds, speaking your mind, and you are not present when the reader or critic damns it. You are probably writing another book. I prefer the safety and remoteness of authorship, if for no other reason than that one may go on writing no matter how she looks, whether she has a distinguishable waistline or not, long after the tragedy queen has lost her beauty and has been obliged to retire, probably in straitened circumstances on account of the extravagant habits she acquired during her affluent period in the theatrical profession. Authors rarely are successful enough to develop their spendthrift talents.

X

WHAT I READ

I WAS in and out of school until my seventeenth year. Toward the last I must have had queer teachers, or I may have been a trifle out of drawing myself, for I was permitted to choose the books I studied from father's library. This was an old and honorable one, collected by two generations of leisure-loving men with reading minds. I recited lessons from Plutarch's 'Lives' and Paley's 'Moral Philosophy.' Poor old Paley! It turns out that he was entirely wrong about morals. I doubt now if it makes much difference whose philosophy you study on this subject. Morals change like rules for pronunciation, and are more confusing to learn than a foreign language. When you know the language you know how to speak it, but one never gets a working knowledge of morals until he learns how to compromise them with a good conscience and an upright mind. It is an obtuse subject and requires much experience in honorable living to master it.

Another book I studied was Tasso's 'Jerusalem Delivered.' Why I chose this poem I cannot imagine, but it has left a trail of flaming angels at war, memories of many flashing colors, and a sort of golden cadence in my mind, although I cannot recall a single line. What I do recall, with that mischievous retrospect we sometimes cast back upon our earliest follies, is the way the good little lady teacher

used to look when I switched forward to read from this book. She used to turn her head sidewise with that weary air polite people have when they must listen to a bore. I always let her have as many pages of the stuff as she would bear.

I have spent a good deal of my life beyond the bounds of the times in which we now live. Most people do who read and think without adding the experience as a fact to their consciousness. If life is brief, I shall never know it. I am not really old in years, but it seems to me that I have been living for ages. Much of my youth was passed a long way back in the centuries. I had a widely assorted companionship then, reaching all the way back to Genesis. Besides the first and closest relation I acquired with Nature, there were the prophets from the Old Testament; pagans of one sort and another from histories of the Greeks and Romans; heroes chosen from poetry and mythology; ghosts, angels of the covenant, Jesus Christ, with a sort of secret hankering for many of the Catholic saints, whose lives had drawn me to them.

These people were amazingly real to me, because I did not know any living people so intimately. The topography of my mind must have been a curious map of ancient lands. Years later, when at last I saw Rome, really it was a disappointment to me; the shattered shell of a great civilization left half buried in the dust of centuries, a frailer, unsubstantial city built into these ruins and filled with little men. No gods on Mount Olympus. I am a Christian, but I did miss the altars and oracles of those fine old

deities in Rome! The sunken place where the Forum had been, but no signs of Lycurgus or of Cæsar.

We never shall know how many great men were created by their biographers, but we may infer how insignificant these same men would be twenty centuries later. I do not think Brutus or Mark Antony would cut much of a figure in the Rome I saw. Still, I have a sort of sympathy for Mussolini, not with him. A modern politician giving himself the airs of a Roman tribune. Who knows but he may be the whelp of atavism? Grant him a Plutarch for a biographer and he might shine for centuries to come as a great man. After a while, it all depends on your biographer whether you live in the memories of men or are forgotten along with the rest of us.

The people I knew in those days stalked through the Scriptures, or they had been poets and gifted men, according to their biographers.

I was not conscious of being different from others of my own age; but I must have been, now that I consider what substance my mind was made of, what scenes my imagination dwelt upon — creation, the slow-traveling patriarch of the Scriptures. I was not allowed to read fiction, but I read a translation of the tragedies by Sophocles. To this day I still have a clearer memory of one scene in the 'Œdipus at Colonus' than of anything I have ever seen acted upon the stage. Œdipus, eyes cut out with Jocasta's golden buckle, with bloody cheeks and beard, standing above her dead body, and the halls of the palace filled with wailing women and woe-stricken men.

This is terrible stuff to be laid away in the mind of

a young girl. Later I added 'Prometheus Bound.' And after so long a time, out of the memory of such scenes, I found out what tragedy is if you write it — an act of fate which we perform unwillingly or without knowing what we do. Terribly simple, in a bleak place, or in a place of great splendor like a palace; all in the scene, not to be told in many words.

Along with this I read Dean Swift, Sut Lovingood and Byron's poetry. Mother was no great reader. I doubt if she knew of some of the lands through which Gulliver traveled, and my impression is that she thought all poetry was virtuous.

I must have acquired a certain boldness of mind from these various sources in an age when the maiden mind was actually tainted with modesty. In reading a Latin fable I was the only girl in the class who would translate the word '*asinus*' into the little English word it means. I remember this instance on account of the blushing embarrassment of my companions. I was not aware of the almost universal existence of the vulgar.

XI

THE TEACHER I HAD

I AM passing briefly through the educational period of my life. It was relatively unimportant. Text-books may furnish a good setting-up exercise for the strengthening of the mind; but if one takes them seriously, or imagines they furnish him with the things he should know along the way he must go, they are injurious. It is a fearful thing to be stitched up and certified in a common-school education and later sold out of a university into the markets for what you are worth or not worth to the world. You have really no wisdom of your own. Your mind is a short or long pattern of other men's thoughts, theories, and convictions. You aren't anything but an addled egg of information, or a good one that must be hatched later into a mind of your own.

I am not opposed to education, you understand, but to the way we get it. The best ones in my opinion are obtained as a man makes his own living, by work and experience. I would rather learn from a great man or woman traveling a wind-swept road than to study all the textbooks in a school taught by a little fellow who knows the whole course. This is my objection to schools, all the way from the primary grades through the universities. The teachers may be scholars, but they are rarely great men. They have nothing of themselves to impart that is

worth emulating. If so they do not impart it. Teaching is a business, not a process of inspiration.

The teachers I had must have been amazingly patient with me, but never in the way of discipline. I reeked with learning in those days; I was at the puppy-leg stage of my intellectual development, not steady in my mental wobblings, but ravenous for the bones of other men's thoughts and too much absorbed to practice the pranks of the average young person in school.

I read more Latin than now is required in a college course, but it was only a way I had of making the ancient dust fly through Virgil, Horace, and the rest of those orators and poets who lay so safely buried centuries deep in their fame. I doubt if I dealt honestly with the moods and tenses of their verbs. There was some mystery about the dative case which I never tried to fathom. If I derived any benefit from these remarkably free translations, it was the practice I had in the valiant and unscrupulous use of words for translating my own thoughts later on. However it may be for others, this has been for me more difficult than translating the most obtuse Latin sentence. Horace was dead and could not protest; but being alive and exacting, I fared worse at my own hands. To find the right words for an idea that ought to have wings and tail feathers is an art I have never mastered. But if by chance one such thought does rise living and winged, I have an inkling of how the Lord must have felt when the first lark He made rose upon its wings with a song in its throat.

No human has the right to feel so gratified with

his own performance, but our real feelings are rarely governed so strictly by modesty as we pretend they are when another man praises us. Modesty is often the hand we throw up to ward off his smashing blow if he should suspect how conceited we are. What I mean is that thoughts really are miracles, and it gives you a secret sensation of amazement and joy to get one of the things out of the far reaches of wisdom, disentangled from your past and your hereafter and set down in a few simple words which bequeath it to mankind.

I have done a lot of presumptuous thinking along this line, sneaking around the outer edges of creation, trying to stretch up to sensations not really lawful to know. Sometimes, taking a look above and abroad in a star-blossoming night, I miss the prideful humility of David when he exclaimed, 'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?' What I am tempted to wonder is how the Almighty feels when a brand-new star slips out into his infinities and swings obedient forever to the first sun that draws it. And how does He take it when one of these stars He has ordained wobbles in its orbit and shoots off into space until it is dissolved like a dust ball?

I do not suppose it makes much difference. The thing is not wasted, only a trifle more dust to be gathered in passing by the other planets. Some time has elapsed since we have had a certified measurement of the circumference of the earth. Apt as not

it is a much larger heavenly body than it used to be, or smaller, packed tighter from revolving so fast for so many million years. We cannot rise far enough above it or scratch deep enough into it to find out much about it, and our thoughts remain as far from His thoughts as the East is from the West, and God still is the name of what we do not know, but must believe to live. Still, I have this hankering after the streaming glories of His mind. I do not care a thing about being a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory. These are competitive values. What I want is the power to think myself into the order and majesty of His peace, so filled with energy and what we call love, which undoubtedly must be the law of the whole thing.

Prophets always look ahead when they prophesy. No man can look behind him and tell what might have happened, because what did happen has obscured the view. I have no idea what kind of mind and life I might have had if I had enjoyed the same religious freedom in my youth that I had in choosing the texts I studied. My guess now is that I should have been a very different person, and not nearly so legible morally. Still, if I had had more religious liberty during these formative years, I might have escaped that tightening of the conscience into a sense of guilt from which I have suffered most of my life.

XII

THE 'REBEL'S' CHILD

My memory is eclectic, so to speak, and would never retain what was repugnant to me, especially in the way of education. I have forgotten most of the multiplication table. The algebraic figure of speech, x , is still an unknown quantity to me, though I remember passing creditable examinations in this study. There must have been something wrong with the teachers I had.

Ridpath's 'History of the United States' was the first book I ever read. Vanity was the inspiration of this undertaking. I had been brought up on glorious family legends and I expected to find the volume thickly populated with my ancestors. But it was not. This is characteristic of historians; they omit many men famous in their own families. I think it accounts for the growth and development of the Colonial Dames and the various orders of Daughters. You may set out your family tree in any one of these organizations and enjoy the distinction of being somebody in spite of the negligence of the historians.

After all, I was destined never to finish reading Ridpath's history. I was halted at the Battle of Gettysburg on account of a terrible and unexpected censorship.

Father had been such a good soldier that he was never obliged to boast of his war record until he was a very old man and was compelled to fan up his

past glories to confound the current generation of his posterity who fought in gas masks from dugouts during the World War. I was therefore a disciple of Ridpath without sectional animus. I was ignorant of the opprobrious reputation the word 'rebel' had in the South. The probability is that I had never heard it spoken, as bad language is not used in the best society.

One night we were at the supper table. I was still sitting on the dictionary in the bottom of my chair in order to be sufficiently elevated for the proper use of my knife and fork. But I had been reading Ridpath that day and suddenly showed forth with some childish remark about what had been done to the rebel army at Gettysburg.

It was as if I had cast a bomb in the midst of this peaceful scene. Mother turned pale and stared at me as if she felt a serpent in her bosom.

'Rebel?' shouted father.

I died beneath his gaze, but kept my eyes open, fascinated by the noble rage that seemed to transform him. He stood up, cast his chair from him, ground his teeth, swept a gesture that made the candle flicker, folded his arms and strode back and forth, lashing the tail of his fury.

He called upon God to witness his sorrow that a man should live to hear his own child call him a rebel!

I keened my nose and wept, still wondering why rebel should be a bad name.

Father laid his hand upon my head and forgave me with a sob. After all, he said, it was not my fault

that an honest man who had suffered, bled and died twice for his country, should be set down in history as a rebel. His unfortunate child was the victim of a partisan historian. Where was that book?

I slid hastily from my seat and ran to fetch the iniquitous volume. Mother had purchased it from a book agent without suspecting how the author had branded her husband and all brave men of the South.

Father opened it, stared at the printed pages, wrinkled his nose, snarled his lip as if he literally smelled the meanness of ignoble truth, gripped it in his two hands, tore it asunder and tossed it through the open window behind him, the pages still tittering maliciously as they fluttered down.

Followed the first and only address I ever heard on the Lost Cause, impassioned, and, I still believe, veracious. He let me have the facts — state sovereignty, slavery, secession — his own part in the struggle. He opened his wounds and bled afresh. Did I see his feet — halting before me and standing at attention upon these members. He had marched without shoes through the snows of Virginia and left his tracks there written in blood! He had slept in this snow without so much as a shawl to cover him. He had fought all day and all night when he was sick from hunger. And he'd never been shot in the back! Only to be besmirched with the title of 'rebel'!

Socrates about to die had nothing on him in the way of eloquence, though he may have surpassed father in the logic of his defense. But watch the

world; it is ever more easily stirred and convinced by oratory than by logic.

Sitting with my hands clasped in an ecstasy of all emotions attendant upon such a ministry, I was born again and confirmed in the doctrines of my own people. I have let it all go long since. I have praised Lincoln and Grant — not Sherman, of course, though he may deserve it from another point of view — but it has been, you may say, in the way of good sportsmanship. The fact that the South was wrong will never make the methods of the North seem right to me. I doubt now if any means used which result in war can be right. It comes to me now that the men of the North and the men of the South never were enemies. They fought like growing brothers during the Civil War, leaving no malice behind. It was the ethics practiced by the carpet-baggers that estranged the two sections.

XIII

NEW ENGLAND AND THE SOUTH

I CAN look back through the whole of my life at incidents like this hour with my father which bent the twig of my mind and determined the very nature of my thinking even after I outgrew my prejudices. Thus to this day it impresses me as a queer coincidence that altruism, of all things, flared up about that time in New England. Very few of us realize the fact, but it is a sort of instinct to cover the deepest transgression with a canopy of high-mindedness. If you are a man, it is safer and more veracious not to speak too nobly of your own nature, nor to spread the wing of your soul too far. The weather changes and you come down in a bad place. Here in the South we are not good; but that is the point — we do not pretend to be. Instead of hiding behind altruism, we have permitted the world to capitalize our faults. This has been good for us. We have fewer faults than if we had lived according to a self-deceiving pose.

Time has proved us.

Personally, I prefer to have descended from those Virginia colonists who came to this country of their own free will, like hardy swashbuckling adventurers. They appear to me to have had more ease of mind, better manners, and finer qualities than fighting over doctrines ever imparts. But the Pilgrims, who came to escape religious persecution, were very good

people. They were a bit wasp-waisted in their pieties, but they had a sublime courage for enduring hardship. They were the rawboned element of Protestantism, essential to the life of a new nation in a new hemisphere, and if it had not been for persecution in England they would not have come. This country might have been settled as it is now being gorged by the overflow populations of Europe. Such people never make a civilization. Their instinct is to destroy it. So we must be thankful that enough of the hardiest and bravest Protestants were driven out to start life decently here, thus giving us two hundred years in which to mold and harden a civilization needed now to withstand the disasters of Europe.

But these people were encompassed about by the will of God. They were obliged by the everlasting order of things to survive their faults and to acquire the right virtues, as we all must do or perish. So the New England colonists stopped hanging witches and modified their blue laws. And the Virginia blades settled down and went to work. But they must have suffered cruelly for the harshness of their beliefs. History proves that the effects of theology differ dangerously from those of religion upon the characters of men. One reduces religion to formulas, doctrines, and creeds; the other lifts men by some simple wisdom of the heart to a sort of nobler goodness, kin to God.

We may perform one of those acts of impromptu justice called a lynching, which is reprehensible, but not so bad as the torturing and slaying of forty

innocent men by mob violence, crimes that are more and more frequently committed in other sections. Many a time men and women of New England have felt obliged to tell me that they would not dare to live in the lawless South, no doubt with the best altruistic intentions of bringing home to me the realization of the dangerous conditions we have produced down here. Now it turns out that the South is the safest place to live in this country. It is the wisest place to build factories and start industries, because it is easier to obtain labor and control labor here. We are about to be swamped and capitalized by money and immigrants from the North. It is a terrible situation, because there is no way of limiting the quota, say from New England, as the national Government limits those from desperate Europe. Personally, I prefer the peace and poverty we now enjoy to the thrift, energy, and wealth these people insure. Presently we shall have here the same disorders and problems that greed and altruism have bred in the North, East, and West. Time changes the condition of people, but not their nature or their disposition. The people of the North, whether they are Christians, capitalists, or the sons of carpet-baggers, have a talent for meddling with the social, intellectual, and commercial life of the South, and the nobler they are the more they meddle. It is one of the characteristics of greatness of soul. This provincial state of mind is bound to affect the quality of their piety.

They have more sense than we have, but they are pathetically deficient in that deeper wit of under-

standing. They understand nothing but their own minds and their own wills. They are artlessly hypocritical in their relations to us. Having failed to uplift their own masses spiritually or morally, they are on a religious trek constantly toward this section. Their world is not our world; their God is not our God. We are a warmer, kinder, more spiritually minded people, therefore more patient with their chastening efforts in our behalf than, say, the West would be.

The awful thing always characteristic of them is their desire and determination to govern and take all the credit for everything accomplished. I do not think a union between the Northern and Southern Methodist Church would be any more successful, except in a financial way, than any other government set up by a foreign people who had the balance of power. And religion consists in no such circumstance. I have my very grave doubts as to whether the great body of Methodists in the South favor this contemplated corporation of the two churches. The thing is being engineered by the politicians and princes of these respective organizations.

XIV

CERTAIN LIES

ACCORDING to my way of thinking, one of the most engaging charms I had as a child was the simplicity with which I lied. I was totally deficient in the arts of deceit, but the slightest moral pressure from mother sent me flying to cover behind a perfectly transparent falsehood. I have known many a man to practice prevarication in his pacifying relations to a woman. They choose this method of childish fiction in dealing with women through some simplicity of their own psychology. And it is the secret which nearly every woman keeps that her experience with her youngest child and her husband are very similar in this matter. But no such thing is characteristic of the pussyfooting feminine mind. We are much smarter in merely twisting the truth than in lying. Maybe I was too young then to have developed the gender of my faculties. My peculiarity was that once I had committed myself to a falsehood I would not confess the truth, nor any part of the truth. Neither prayers nor punishment could move me. My own notion is that this was due to some kind of misdirected self-respect. To this day I have a well-bred horror of confessing.

But mother believed that it was innate depravity and took measures accordingly. One day when I had told a fib and stuck to it, much evidence to the contrary, she took the Bible and read from it that

passage which says, 'All liars have their portion in hell.'

I was not the same after that. I had a conscience which humbled me, and a very real fear of the place lurid with flames where the worm dieth not and liars inherit a certain portion. I was the wicked. My sins accompanied me like a still, small tune. I began the hectic life of indulging in sprees of goodness. I would be very industrious or very thoughtful for a day, but I never could hold any high moral note in living. To this day I hate objective righteousness as every true artist hates drudgery. I am not denying that faith without works is dead; but good deeds, even the very virtues by which you are recognized and praised, frequently adorn a Pharisee.

I have often wondered if all children pass through a period of joyfully achieving innocence. They are not good, but what freedom there must be in not being able to think evil! Maybe Shakespeare was right: 'Tis thinking makes it so.' Certainly it is written of children in the Scriptures, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Which suggests an idea of Heaven I have never seen advanced by a theologian — that it is a place of infinite relief where one may be as unscrupulously busy as a child without doing anything wrong. But we could not risk living in this present world with a generation of such Kingdom-of-Heaven saints. A man with that much innocence in him would be an outlaw. So it may have been all for the best, the mill and anguish I passed through getting my mind and virtues to fit

me and that sum of human heinousness so essential to surviving here.

Guilt must be the parent of the moral sense. We are not born with it. We are born innocent and very dangerous. Then slowly, or quite unexpectedly, we receive that first spiritual perception of ourselves; a guilty feeling that weighs us down, never again to be so free, never again to be the same assured heir of all the stars and half brothers to the angels of God. We call it the voice of conscience, but I am telling you it is the sense of guilt, a ticker in your breast warning you of the change in the value of your virtues, recording the loss of one. It is a good thing, but very painful. I think most of the activities we engage in are due to the effort to escape it. One of the salvation promises is that we shall be delivered from it in the world to come. I do not know about that. I have prayed so often to be delivered from my sins and trespasses, it is inconceivable to me that I could develop very virtuously anywhere without them to brace me morally. I believe in eternal life, but I should feel queer, finished and laid aside, without my temptations to worry me onward and upward from within.

Far be it from me to question the goodness of God because evil is present with us! We should never have the honor of choosing righteousness for ourselves without it. Who would be charitable if no one was in need of charity? Who would know how to practice mercy, forgiveness, and long-suffering if there were no faults or weakness in others to forgive? And how in heaven shall we be able to use

all these virtues so hardly acquired here if there is no occasion to exercise them in heaven? How can we possibly enjoy ourselves where all the other saints are as good as we are and no distinctions made?

We derive more satisfaction than we realize from successful competition with our fellow men in righteousness. I offer no solution; I merely ask these questions of those people who look forward with joy to eternal life without one single familiar thing in prospect to occupy their minds during this infinite stretch of time. As for me, I trust the Lord to make my everlasting life even more interesting than this short one, which has certainly been a feverishly exciting experience. I cannot help hoping there will be a few of the dearer sinners in heaven upon whom one may practice a little encouragement. And I hope there will be tremendous saints also whose attainments far outshine mine, so that I may have the honor of associating with them, as we are proud to be recognized here by great men who have surpassed us in the victories and laurels they have won.

XV

REPUTATION

WE make reputations long before we suspect that we have any such comet's tail of public opinion attached to us. We leave ridiculous caricatures of ourselves along the way, which illustrated tragedies in our lives at the time. Later we come upon these records and pictures and are rarely ever pleased. But somebody has kept them for you, and somebody will remind you of them one day when you are sitting on your pinnacle.

I have been painfully reminded of such things, such as the time in my early school days when I wore the wrong little girl's bonnet and came home with boogers in my hair, the frightful ordeal my head passed through, and mother's tears. She was a woman who made mountains of her mole-hills and then climbed them, dragging me, miserable, after her. I lived a very sensational life with her morally on this account. I remember the almost fainting state of humiliation I fell in on this occasion, because it seemed I was the only child in the whole history of her family that had ever contracted these disgraceful insects. I have also been obliged to recall how I learned to play cards under the school-house, never having seen such things before, nor dreaming that they were the devil's own deck of sins. This business lasted a week, and I cleaned up all the available property of my companions, chiefly

slate pencils. Then one of the heaviest losers virtuously betrayed me to my grandfather, a stern old man who knew more than I did about the iniquitous gift of gambling in my immediate family.

There was a terrible scene, and I was obliged to stand beside the marble-top center table in the parlor, lay my hand on the Bible and swear solemnly never to play cards again. I have kept this vow. The little girl who betrayed me is a grandmother now, an exemplary woman who indulges in nothing worse than a social game of bridge.

I might easily have forgotten these and many other diminishing incidents of my childhood but for the fact that they are treasured in the archives of the family with parsimonious care. If you wish to collect complimentary material for a record of yourself, never appeal to your relations. They may be proud of you as an asset to the family name, but they have a gift for remembering your gawky period privately, the follies and faults you committed and have forgotten. You may have come up in the world with a laurel on your brow, but if you go back home forty years later wearing two laurels on your brow, and a noble expression, they will miss the point. What you are only serves to remind them of the little snub-nosed girl you used to be. They are determined to remember that you are dust. No matter how well you conduct yourself, you cannot fix their attention on your virtues or your fame, but they remember how you looked in a long-tailed ruffled basque and full skirt when you were eight years old. Or how you grew up to be very sarcastic,

and the impudent thing you said to the Baptist preacher who wanted to proselyte you just after you were converted, meaning that the sting of my tongue had not been changed by conversion.

I do not think they mean any harm. They are simply keeping you where you belong in the family no matter where you belong in literature. Still, I would have preferred not to have become such a surprise to these people who knew me in the beginning. It does seem queer that none of them suspected the kind of youngster I really was. I could write a very serviceable anthology on family relations; but it is wiser not to do so, because some of them are bound to survive me and have the last word. It would be truthful but misleading.

XVI

'BEAUTIFUL AND PRECIOUS'

THE older I grow the more beautiful and precious life seems to me. The time will come, I know, when there will be nothing else to pray for except life and everlasting life. Give me that and an even break between joys and vicissitudes, the same right I have here to choose goodness, and I would cheerfully risk existence longer than a pious saint could stand with folded wings singing in heaven. But I know very little about this. Maybe I shall be changed when my corruption puts on incorruption, acclimated to all this music and brightness and the high level of perfect goodness. In the meantime, surely the Lord will respect my honesty in clinging to my human feelings, since I am subject to them according to His will.

I do not know how it is, but there is a doctrine which teaches damnation like consequences in all the churches with which I am familiar, either by election or predestination — terms which distinctly imply the exclusion from salvation of those not elected or predestined. I can find no Scripture in the Bible that justifies these interpretations without giving the passage a theological twist. The Methodist church, which makes such generous provision for salvaging and saving those who fall from grace, is not without blame in this matter. It covers the whole ground for the doctrines of election and pre-

destined damnation, or salvation as the case may be, with the doctrine of apostasy. The only difference is that an apostate chooses his own fate and is not predestined to it from the foundation of the world. This is only apparently putting the blame where it belongs. The threat hidden beneath is that the Lord will stand just so much, then His spirit ceases to strive with a man. When you think about it, this is the worst fate of all. What is to defend a person highly sensitized spiritually from the perpetual fear of being forsaken in his sins?

I had my first lesson in theology very early — religion is something else. If you have the mind to believe, the Scriptures are singularly clear; but only a student and a scholar can make heads and tails of theology. It is a sort of puzzle the wavering minds of men have made from the Word of God, to the end that sinners have been exalted by a creed, saints burned at the stake for the sake of a doctrine, and thousands obliged to flee from one country to another to save their necks and their liberty of conscience.

Maybe all that was for the best. Certainly, if you give it time, the worst turns out for the best.

Mother was the kind of Methodist who could afford to believe without much personal anxiety in this doctrine. She was a truly good woman, with an Old Testament mind. Somewhere along the way she warned me of the danger. She impressed me with the fact that if I hardened my heart the spirit would cease to strive with me. The time came when God abandoned the willful sinner and left him to

his fate. I went around with this red-hot coal of fire on my spiritual back for a long time. I acquired habits of thought then that worked havoc with my peace for half a lifetime. I have never entirely escaped the fear that I may turn out to be an apostate after all. It seizes upon me like a malady. I am troubled by the realization that the spirit does not seem to strive with me as it did when I was younger. This is a fearfully lonely feeling, and not rational. But sanity, in my opinion, is an achievement. I have seen very few well-balanced people in my life who were not dunces.

I was finally soundly converted and joined the church. At the time that experience seemed more miraculous than it does now; I have been born again so many times since. First I had to adjust myself to the heavenly mind. Then I must adjust myself to the ministry of my husband. Finally, after his death, I had to be born again to the world, capable of dealing with it sensibly and honorably. My experience is that this last requires more divine inspiration than being a private Christian protected by all the defenses that marriage and religion raise about a woman's life.

XVII

THE WORKING OF LOVE

WHEN I was nine years old I remember a certain thing that happened. I was sitting somewhere behind the old field schoolhouse with three other little girls. We were making wishes and telling our fortunes by pulling the petals from daisies. I made a wish and tried it out by the daisy petals. But I would not tell what it was.

‘I know,’ said one little girl.

‘You never could guess,’ I retorted.

She bent over and whispered, ‘You wished for a husband!’

It turned out that we had all wished for husbands. We were the simplest, most innocent of little creatures, at the doll-mothering, playhouse stage of development, totally ignorant of love and lovers. But we felt the need of husbands, as, I suppose, the Eastern Hemisphere might have longed for the Western Hemisphere to make the world complete. We felt incomplete.

The florescence of nature came to me as it does to all youth, unbeknowingly. What I remember about that is the quantities of romantic poetry I consumed, practicing at the same time a very strong virginal antagonism toward young men.

At last love and the lover did come to me. I have written all the experience out in another place, and of my marriage at the age of seventeen.

Love does something to the mind. But it is something that you cannot use so long as it lasts as a vital part of your experience. During the first ten years of my married life it seemed to close the intellectual pores of my mind. I lived according to that definition of faith which says it is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' I passed through many joys, poverty, fear, and great tribulations according to that ritual of one sentence. I did not think in the terms of ideas, but only in the terms of love. I was guided entirely by my husband's mind, which was one you may say literally stricken by the Holy Spirit. He was a preacher and made only one use of his mind, that of finding God and teaching sinners the way of salvation.

This was not as you may suppose a drab and monotonous existence, but one filled with strange and lofty experiences.

I was destined to discover that mother's ideas of religion were coldly platonic as compared with the passionate fervor of my circuit rider in his devotion to God. Mother believed in behaving yourself and keeping the Commandments and walking according to the ordinances of the church to which she belonged. He believed in literally living the life of Jesus Christ — and could not do it. This brought on the struggle that lasted for him more than twenty years. I tried to keep up with him. The first time he fasted and prayed all day after we were married, I fasted also, but could not pray that long. Protracted prayers are a mystery to me. I can

simply fall upon my knees and let that be a prayer any time. What is the good of words to God? They are symbols we use to one another because we neither know nor are known to one another as He knows us.

This was the last time I ever fasted, because at the end of the day I was exhausted, nervous and in no Christian mood.

I cannot tell in years how long it took me to do it, but I finally adjusted myself about my husband like a small protesting world and so stood the siege. Love held us as close together as if we had one heart in common. But I do not remember that we ever had the same mind about anything. The point at last with me was to get mine disentangled from the bondage of his brave, beautiful, but impractical religious beliefs. I never succeeded. All these years after his death I am still more conscious of the truth that led him than of my own right mind. I am still beholden to his God; I have never got round to serving my own God with a free mind and a comfortable, cheerful spirit. I must fall into a state of anguish once in so often, make sacrifices that do not ease the pain, and go about wondering where the witness of my spirit is. I have the feeling sometimes that at last I may be dragged through the gates of heaven, spent, woeful, and humble, by the very power of his spirit; that I shall not stride in with my hat on and my head up, bearing a good conscience with me in token of a well-spent life.

If you have been born in the twentieth century and have a good deal of human dust sticking to your

soul, if you really love the world, remembering that God made it and blessed it, as others think they love only Heaven; if you like human beings, good and bad, better than you do saints — it is a queer feeling to know that you are forever involved in a mediæval religion of asceticism, sacrifice, and sufferings.

By this time it is my very nature to work up hardships and great spiritual struggles for myself which only involve me deeper and higher in the will of my husband's God — all the time remembering the child I used to be, so sure of a kinder God, so peacefully at home beneath His kind heavens. It is a queer situation which will end very creditably, I suppose, with my funeral.

XVIII

VENTURES IN SCRIPTURES

I WAS eleven years younger than my husband, being really in the plastic period of adolescence. He was the gentlest of men, but he had a brilliant and mature mind, a queer temple of intellectual loveliness with pure classical lines. He did his thinking as a master architect does his drawing, with delicacy and precision. He was never overbearing, but the elegance, sweetness, and sincerity of his mind confounded my younger wits. I supposed that a man who could think like that must be correct in his conclusions, and for something like ten years I surrendered my own mind and left him to do our thinking. Most of it was pious, but always informed with that effulgence of the spirit peculiar to the rarer saints. My impression now is that I became a very good young person, by ear, so to speak, and that I was strangely stupid. The mental background I had acquired from much ravenous reading before my marriage faded. I forgot Tasso's great poetry and settled down on the hillside of a mountain circuit with Lundy and the beatitudes. Maybe this was good for me spiritually, but it was diminishing mentally, which, in my opinion, was never meant to be the effect of any Scriptures upon the mind.

Lundy was not a practical man spiritually. I remember distinctly how determined he was to remain poor in spirit that he might become one of

those legitimate heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. I imitated his poverty here with the same artless sincerity a child imitates an older person, though I could never put much feeling into the idea of being poor in spirit. The effect upon him was that with his nature elegant to the point of fastidiousness, and his scholarly mind, he walked humbly hand in hand with the meanest of his flock, making himself literally one of the least of them.

It was all wrong. I call your attention to the fact that Jesus went up into a mountain and set Him above the multitude before He began that great Sermon on the Mount. And when He finished it and came down the great multitude followed Him. I do not suppose He was jostled by that crowd. He was apart and far beyond them, and so held Himself there and everywhere else. It will not do to be intimately poor in spirit with people who have no sense of your meaning. If you do they will keep you poorer than the Scriptures require both in spirit and fact.

Lundy was the same way about that beatitude which recommends those that mourn for they shall be comforted. We were rich in love and peace and were being as good as it is possible for human beings to live, but he would mourn in spite of everything for his transgressions, any transgression he could remember. He was the most unforgiving man of himself I ever knew.

In this connection I remember the first theological ruction we had after our marriage. He had harked up one of his former sins and was making himself miserable about it. I tried every way to smooth over

his transgression — in vain. Finally I lost patience and called his attention to the generous forgiving Gospel he preached to other sinners. Did he believe he preached the truth? Certainly he did, was his reply.

‘Well then,’ I retorted, ‘why should you malign the goodness of God by imagining you yourself are not forgiven according to the same Gospel?’

This was one of the many clinches we had over these beatitudes. He said that a man’s conscience must be his guide in such matters. He reserved the right to repent of his own sins! He went on to imply that I might be morally obtuse. This was the straw that broke my camel’s back. I retorted that I was tired, and I supposed the Lord was tired of the vain repetition of his repentance over some little dead and forgotten transgression. I thought such conduct was morally debilitating. From this we had hot words and I flung myself upon the bed and wept bitterly.

My belief is that I had some glimmerings even as far back as that of the true meaning of these particular Scriptures. I know now that they are emergency remedies for the soul and not designed to create a perpetual state of mind. The effort to practice them all the time will victimize any man in his relations to his fellow men. I feel better most of the time, but now and then I have known what it is to be poor in spirit before the Lord on the occasion of some defalcation in virtue or patience or courage; but it is not my idea to tell any one else about it. I do my mourning and hurry on as quickly as possible

to the more cheerful part of this beatitude which says 'for they shall be comforted,' feeling that I do myself credit by taking the Lord at His word as soon as possible. I have practiced swiftness in acts of faith and found it profitable. If the Bible means anything at all, you have a right to believe it. That is the test of the truth of the Scriptures — believe them, and if they do not come true you have the right to deny them. I have never had the chance to deny a single one, though of course I have lacked the spiritual capacity to try out the whole thing.

But there is that one which says, 'Blessed are the meek' — meaning teachable — 'for they shall inherit the earth.' It is not my nature to be teachable, but I have been in such tight quarters all my life that I have been obliged to learn a great deal with meekness. And it is a fact, I have inherited more of the earth than I deserve. To be strictly honest, I have never hungered and thirsted after righteousness to the point of egotism characteristic of some saints. I always had a feeling of modest limitations along this line; but now that I think back to those first years of my married life, it seems to be anguishing and pitiful the way I strove to be good. It was so terribly necessary if I was to keep up with Lundy.

The motive was a trifle crooked, as you will see; but the Lord honored it as He did that woman's faith who had the issue of blood, which was an unintelligent faith. For as I look back now it seems to me that I was pretty well filled with righteousness then according to the other end of that beatitude.

With me, being merciful is not a virtue. It comes too easy for me to have deserved much in return, like some kind of happy weakness of character. Still, I have finally been overwhelmed with mercies. I feel sometimes that I might have used them to a better advantage further back in the years when my needs were very great. But the point I make is that this Scripture was fulfilled. I have even been pure enough in heart at rare intervals to see God. But not often when I was up and shining. Usually it would be when I was passing through some valley of the shadow of great grief. After the pain is over I have always been able to look back and know that sorrows are much more purifying and elevating to the mind than joys.

But when it comes to that verse which says 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God,' it has depended upon the circumstances whether I came out of the scrimmage like such a child. I have known myself to forgo the blessing and refuse to make a peace that left me in the lurch. In that case I hunted up some such Scripture as an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and took what satisfaction I could get from that. Never yet have I parted with an eye or a tooth, or turned the other cheek except to my Lord, who is the only one who has the right to smite me.

These, of course, are my favorable experiences with the truth of the Bible. I have suffered a-plenty from the unfavorable passages, such as, 'Judge not. . . . For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.' I have had this experience a thousand

times. Some one who knows me, or a stranger of whom I have never heard, rises up and passes judgment upon me as if it was a harsh and sacred duty he performed — without ever suspecting, I suppose, that he is measuring to me again unfair and superficial criticisms I have passed on other people. They do have somewhat the advantage in this business, because there are so many more of them than there is of me, and one person cannot spare the time to pass as many adverse judgments as one author endures. Even at that, I fare very well on account of getting so many more favorable judgments than I deserve from the same sources.

I was so much involved in the purely spiritual struggle of trying to live above and without the world until I was thirty years old that I became a sort of ignoramus. I cannot now recall what were the social and intellectual conditions of this period. I remember who the great preachers were, but not the name of a single statesman or public servant except one old congressman who used to do his electioneering at Sunday-school picnics. Readers of the circuit-rider stories must have observed that these are records in religious living to the exclusion of all earthly interests.

I suppose this is the reason why even 'My Book and Heart' produces the impression upon some readers of being the chronicle of a narrow and dreary life. I do not think it is, you understand. It seems to me that almost any person with a provincial mind might fail to appreciate the literature of a foreign country with which they were totally un-

familiar. The spiritual world which I inhabited at that time is not known now by a great many people otherwise very well informed. They are unable therefore to appreciate the vividness and romance of such an existence. It seems drab to them because they live in sums and dividends and secular realities and the same kind of diversions, not in sublime illusions.

But try chasing an impractical saint up one Jacob's ladder after another for twelve years and find out for yourself what a varied and stimulating experience it is. Hunting big game in a jungle is nothing to the risks you take and the rarefied hardships you endure and the keen relief you feel now and then between adventures. I cannot claim that it was mentally exhilarating, but I developed considerable wing power of the spirit very helpful to me when I finally did go back, pick up my mind, shake some of the star dust off, and begin to use it with a good conscience for my own benefit in this present world.

But never so long as I live can I escape the tragic effects upon my life of these early years. My mind is free now, and I can reason as clearly as the next one about what a dear and blessed gift from God the world has been to me; but in my heart I seem still to belong back there in the years upon the lower rungs of that ever-upward-stretching ladder I used to climb toward Lundy's God. I cannot get over feeling hard pressed spiritually sometimes, as if I was in dangerous need of chastening — I suppose the steel bridge never forgets the furnace in which

its girders were melted and forged; I would give anything now and then to rest from this smelting sense of God and be comfortable in my carnal mind, but I never can be.

XIX

THE WISDOM OF THE WORD

WHAT I have tried to prove is this: The Word of God is a prophecy of us in all of our manifestations and it records the laws of life and conduct from which no man can escape. Whether he is a good one or a bad one, he will find his portrait drawn there and a complete prophecy of what his fate will be. It never fails; it always comes true, for the atheist, agnostic, or spiritualistic sorcerer no less than for the saint.

Just look yourself up in that Book, and if you know how, you will find yourself predicted and recorded in it down to the very nose of your nature. Set down a list of your virtues and look up the rewards promised in return for these virtues, and you will know for certain what your dividends in living will be if you hold onto your assets. Make a list of your vices and weaknesses. Then, if you have the courage, look up the consequences which follow them as recorded in this Book and you will know long before judgment day what will happen to you even in this present world. 'He that liveth by the sword shall perish by the sword.'

Even if one does not feel the keen edge of the blade in his breast, he is cut down one way or the other, and knows it whether any one else suspects it or not. He may be a rich man and a philanthropist, and he may get a great send-off, with a splendid funeral and a mausoleum set over his grave; but if

his fortune was built upon widows' mites and the bread taken from the poor, if he swindled and cheated, if he practiced usury, he went down to his dust a very poor man and knows it. Because the Word is written in him and only copied in the Bible.

The Baptists are not so far wrong about their notions of predestination and election, though far be it from me to travel my days encompassed about by their doctrines. That would be too nerve-racking to the mortal mind. Give me a creed with more elbow room in it for my transient transgressions and more encouragement for believing I have a chance to save my own soul by growing my own virtues according to the Word, which I could not have if I got the notion that I was damned or elected from the foundation of the world.

The place where the makers of these sterner creeds miss their cue, in my opinion, is when they fail to realize that the Scriptures are a sort of key to which we may refer and find the answer to the equation we are. They contain the history of all dead men and the prophecies of all living men and men to come. The smallest little squinched-up fraction of a saint can look in that Book and find out exactly what he is equal to and even how to become the whole unit of one. But we turn the trick. We do make ourselves according to the mind we use in the business. I do not know any more terrifyingly liberal provision made by Providence in our behalf. I have often wondered why the preachers do not say more about it, for it is far more convincing than the damnation gospel with which they used to set us afire.

I had no such wisdom of the Word as this, however, in the days of which I am now writing. I was a sort of Protestant Catholic, if you know what I mean. I accepted Lundy's interpretations of the Gospels as a devout Catholic gets his from the priest. And I was not very much worried about not being able to live up to his ideals in the Christian life. Who has ever kept pace with the piety of a good priest? I did not feel obliged to do so. I existed in a state of mental obedience to certain religious convictions which were not my own. This was bad for me mentally and morally. I had considerable natural ability, but I remember distinctly being afraid to cut loose and think thoughts kin to my kind of mind lest I should sin against my husband's faith. The virtues that one gets under such conditions do not really belong to her, but to the church or priest who imposes them. You are trained to them as a leopard is trained to jump through fiery hoops in a circus without singeing his tail. Without suspecting such a thing, I was that artificial in my Christian life during this period, a pathetically accomplished trick saint.

I have sometimes wondered if the stampede of human souls from the tyranny of creeds accounts for the strange mental and moral disorders of our times, and that presently, being as we are, forever immortal and close kin to God, we shall discover righteousness for ourselves and choose goodness as the great vocation of man, as it surely is. One thing is certain — in every age when the people have not been permitted to study the Scriptures, but have

been obliged to accept a church's interpretation of the Word, there followed a period of animal simplicity of mind in the masses, ignorance, loss of ambition, initiative, and all the poverty, follies, and meanness of mind which issue from such conditions.

Without every kind of liberty, men must perish, and they do. The only knowledge that really counts in character is the knowledge we get for ourselves tested by experience. This is the reason why some very cultured people remain so ignorant and ineffective. The only law that ever will actually control men is the will to obey their own conscience. Therefore the primary object of every preacher and teacher should be to set up the ideal of courage and an honest mind. Such people are safe citizens in this world and the next one. But they are not safe under doctrines, creeds, and laws arbitrarily imposed, whether they get them from the Bible or the Bolsheviks.

Consider the condition of our own country now. The democratic form of government is the best form for patriots. We were patriots when we signed the Declaration of Independence. Now we are not in principle or conduct. We are getting a commercialized conscience and covering the snare of it with philanthropy. So it turns out that the Constitution we made back there in the days when we were plain Christian patriots does not control the mind or illustrate the character of this nation now.

A monarchical form of government would be no better. Mankind seems to be outgrowing kings, not by growing better but less good. We are turning

our back upon conscience and the Ten Commandments. No system of laws will govern such a people. I do not know what the political economists think of this situation, but as an old woman who looks at it through the passages of many Scriptures, I see the shadows of terrible events lengthening across the world. It is coming, that fearful punishment men inflict upon men for their sins. It is coming because it is not in us to endure too long our own unrighteousness. This is the law of moral economy written in us which we cannot escape.

The big knot in this whole problem is human nature. But once in so often we do untie it and straighten things out, not so much by the grace of God, but by the perverted righteousness of ferocity. Then we react and turn out once more to be the children of God — not lost after all, only chastened.

The secret of all things is as far from us as the East is from the West and as His ways are from our ways. Therefore, the higher standard we reach in pure romance the nearer we are to truth. I prefer Milton's poetry, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, my choice of the Psalms, and a few of the elder hymns to anything Mr. H. G. Wells can think or write about the beginnings of life or the history of Christianity. It is interesting copy and contains much entrancing information, but Mr. Wells has too much sense and too little faith in the right direction to be the medium of the Lord's divine illusion, which clothes us like a garment and is the only protection we have against the destructive rationalism of the mortal mind.

We have daily examples now of an educational system which encourages license in thinking along these lines. Two youths who graduated with distinction from two leading universities developed such unscrupulous intellects that they planned a monstrous crime. They had an ambition to commit a 'perfect crime,' as formerly Christian education inspired men to achieve honor. They executed a murder and proceeded with their plans for blackmail, ransom, and the scientific torture of their victims. They were not originally perverts. Now they must be regarded as criminally insane. They are the products of the rational system in education and of the ever-increasing intellectual slums produced by the license of this system.

I think Mr. William Jennings Bryan has the wrong bull by the horns when he assails the theory of evolution. It is not a theory, but a fact distinctly recorded in Genesis and proved by the whole history of creation down to the present time. But he might become a benefactor of youth if he would exercise the same energy in getting an interstate alienist commission appointed to test the moral sanity of many learned professors in our schools and universities. The findings of such a commission would go far toward revealing the sources of the wave of criminal insanity that is showing its crest in every court in this country. Too many learned doctors without any faith in the law which God is, are teaching young people how to think. They become criminals mentally whether they ever commit a crime or not.

XX

CONFESSION AND THE CHURCH

BUT what about the Church in all this moral confusion? More and more active, more and more prosperous, without having much effect upon the situation! What has become of that note of authority with which it formerly controlled in so great a measure the conduct of men? Well, it turns out to be a sort of spiritual bluff the Church put up, now no longer effective because men have learned how to think.

This is a dangerous discovery in view of the fact that we do not know enough or fear enough to think righteously. But less than at any time for the last two thousand years are we listening to the voice of the preachers. It is they who have their ear to the ground listening to the rumbling demands of the world. They are cats fighting over modernism.

I do not know what a modernist is, but my impression is that it is an element in the ministry of some churches anxious to accommodate its members and keep them cordial by yielding to their demands for less piety and more diversion. One pastor has introduced the 'sacred dance' about his church altar and quotes David's example as his justification. David was a great singer, but not a good man. This preacher might take another man's wife as David took Uriah's and be quite as plausible in his contention.

The Methodist Church has just lifted the ban on worldly amusements for its members. And we are just now getting the news of a fine old bishop about to be tried for heresy who strode into the court of bishops accompanied by his radical lawyer. He looks as queer and out of drawing as Socrates must have appeared going off with that young rascal Alcibiades to make a night of it!

What I mean is that the Church is losing its dignity and authority as a holy institution. The debacle was inevitable, because its oppressive methods over the minds and imaginations of men were at variance with the wisdom of God. His Word was split into doctrines and creeds. No one denomination of us could use the whole of it. The plan of salvation varied according to the Church to which you belonged, and the doctrines by which we were to be damned varied even more. A good deal was taught concerning deliverance from sin, and nothing much was proved concerning freedom in Christ, which is the whole thing.

Jesus was of all men the mildest and tenderest in his relation to men, but the prelates, dignitaries, and princes of all the churches with which I am familiar have been overbearing either in their own personal character or in their interpretation of the will of God. This was their method during the Church's period of power to frighten men into the Kingdom of Heaven, as now during its decline we find the disposition to coax people into the Church by offering indulgences.

There is no warrant in the Scriptures for such

practices. They contain the laws of righteousness, the rules of living set down plain enough for a way-faring man to understand. We are left free to enjoy the rewards of our virtues and to suffer the consequences of our transgression. The rest is silence. This is where the Church made its mistake — too much preaching and terrorizing, not enough teaching of just the Word. Now we have the reaction.

XXI

LUNDY AND I WALK AND TALK

It is queer how thoughts you had long ago and the very scene of these thoughts come back to you after you have lived a dozen later lives. I recall something now that indicates how narrow the margin was then between me and one of the threadbare fallacies of my sex:

Lundy and I were walking late in the afternoon through the college campus. I remember the deepening twilight beneath the trees. I wore a dark dress. I was young, slender, pale, homely — what I mean is that I remember feeling this way, sad and put upon. Lundy was stepping along innocently beside me, gracefully silent, no doubt enjoying this silence, for he was one who never practiced speech as a relief for intellectual hysteria. He could retain his thoughts like a gentleman. Suddenly I let out what I was thinking about the world's injustice to women. We were the victims of the whole social and domestic order of mankind. We were the bond servants of a civilization which we had no part in making. We had no rights, only duties to perform, and so on and so forth. I cannot think now how I came by such thoughts. I must have read something along this line, and, like D—— was suffering from mental regurgitation.

What brought me to my own personal senses was the look Lundy gave me, not reproachful, but

startled, as if he had received a thrust and wondered if he deserved it.

We walked on, staring straight ahead; but I could feel my husband searching himself, looking for his sins against me, and his harshness. This was unendurable. I sat down beside the road and made haste to renege. All at once it was clear how good this man had been to me, how hard he worked that I might be a little more comfortable, how patient he was with my ruffian mind, and how he had given me all the love he could spare from his jealous God. And now — appalling thought — what if he went off on one of his remorseful tangents, his ever uncertain peace destroyed by my complaint?

Never did a woman praise her husband more fervently than I did for the next few minutes. I laughed and stroked his legs. He would not sit down! He had the rigid air of a man who preferred to take his punishment standing up. I vowed I was only teasing him. As a matter of fact, I was not thinking of my own husband at all when I began to drool about the wrongs of women. I must have been seeking martyrdom at large.

This was one of those little epochs we make in living. I passed as quick as a flash through an enlightening mental process. From that moment I escaped the idea of grievances from which many women suffer too much in their imaginations. I have been a sluggard ever since about correcting the abuses from which women suffer. I have never been able to cast myself or my pen whole-heartedly into a campaign to clean up the men and bring them

to repentance for their trespasses against us. Let somebody else do it! Because, of course, it must be done before we repent of the wrongs we practice against them, such as headaches, indifference, inefficiency, and extravagance. Upon those occasions when I have been even slightly moved to do my duty toward chastening them, I always think of Lundy, the astonished blue look he gave me that time on the campus in Oxford, as if this was the first he knew of his unkindness and injustice to the woman rib in his side. I remember him, the whole mind the man of him had at that moment, and I cannot believe in the light of his kind heart that men really mean to be unfair to women, any more than we mean to be as exasperating as we are to them sometimes.

We are both the victims of some secret plan of Nature in this business. Men are overbearing on account of the kind of gender they are, and women have nervous squalls on account of the kind of gender they are. If they were entirely compatible, the one to the other, their children might be poor, spiritless creatures. For love certainly is a fearfully eager, exacting, and destructive influence upon the dead level of peace. Therefore incompatibility never seemed to me reasonable grounds for divorce. On the contrary, it must be in Nature the best of all genealogical grounds for those two afflicted people to continue to live together.

The success of marriage does not depend upon how well it is financed with money or social position, but almost entirely upon how much love and wit

you can put into it. Maybe there is some grave inequality of mind or spirit or quality between you in the beginning, but go on living together and presently there will be six of one and half a dozen of the other. You will develop practically the same horse power of perversity, even if the man becomes ferociously impatient and the wife sinks away into cowardly patience.

There is nothing known to man as exasperating as an infernally patient woman. She is either mean or lacking in wit. She never seems to realize that domestic temper in a man is a form of hysteria and should be treated accordingly with a dash of cold water, figuratively speaking, or some sort of shock, which is not meant to be a suggestion of license in conduct. He would ask no better excuse for a tantrum or a tyranny than for his wife to commit a fault. But there are a thousand ways of twisting the tail of a perverse man's temper without ceasing to be an artless lady. All you have to do is to put your mind on it. The Lord has endowed every woman with special talents for this emergency.

I know one charming little gentlewoman who married a very ordinary man who never had the opportunity to control anything or anybody until he achieved this lovely wife. Then he set in to exercise his powers along this line. If he had been the warden of a penitentiary he could not have been more exacting than he was as the master of his own house and the husband of this woman. The marvel was the sweet way she went on showing her admiration and affection for him. Some of us were disposed to

pity her as a poor creature without spirit. Then I caught on to her game.

When her husband was present she never ceased to augment him by telling what he would permit her to do, or more particularly what he would not allow her to do, say or think. Each revelation was, of course, accompanied by an exchange of eye-flashing intelligence between those present and frequently by an embarrassed flush on the husband's face. Nothing could stop her from making these revelations of his meanness and tyranny, always as if she approved of him to the point of boasting. We heard that when he reprimanded her for exposing his private authority she remained artless and too simple to be managed.

'But you know, dear, you did say I should not go to that meeting, and I wanted them to understand why I would not accept their invitation,' and so on and so forth. In the course of two years she let in the light of so much public opinion on this man and his methods as an overbearing husband that now he practically runs to open the door to her every wish. He is tremendously concerned that his neighbors shall know his wife may do as she almighty pleases. And so she does. It was one of the most diverting and enlightening dramas of married life I have seen in years, played without a single mis-said line, and ended, you may say, with much secret applause.

If it appears that I have turned my light too far forward through the years in the immediately preceding pages, I can only say that we must follow the beam while it shines when one is trailing the

mind, even if it is your own mind. This was as good a place as any to set down the effects of that first and last interview with my husband concerning the grievances of women. The reader will recognize it as the veracious record of a strictly feminine mind whatever else he may think.

If I may be permitted to comment upon my own copy in thinking, I should say that once a woman's mind is divorced from her affections it is a trifle unbalanced and untrustworthy no matter how brilliantly and broadly she uses it. It ricochets like a ball fired at a low angle of elevation which is apt to fall back upon her own destiny disastrously. A good many of these duds are already dropping behind the Nineteenth Amendment. I cannot see much improvement in the character of women, though they are more alert mentally and less satisfied. They have gained something they wanted and they have lost something they needed personally and privately. I have felt obliged for conscience' sake to believe in equal rights for women, but the best success I ever had along this line has been to go out and win by my own works and wits the rights I preferred and that would be the most becoming to me in the end.

XXII

WE CONSIDER GREEK CULTURE

My husband was not only a distinguished scholar and a great preacher but he had a brilliant, gallant mind of his own. Let him have it, and God be thanked, was my attitude. Whenever he flared intellectually, I turned out my light and watched with admiration such an *aurora borealis* of fine, cold, clear thinking as I have never seen in any book or heard from another man. Some radiance of his mind will remain upon the horizon of mine as long as I live. I can never tell how much of it has brightened the edges of the copy I have produced since those days. For I have been a cheerful plagiarist of light whenever I found it.

But if we came to loggerheads in an argument, as frequently happened, on any subject, whether it was religion, philosophy, poetry, or the fatalistic mind of the ancient Greeks, I stepped out with gaffs on the legs of my native wit and met him as an unscrupulous wrestler meets an honest big man. I had all the advantages, because I was never constrained in the exercise of my mind by much real knowledge of the subject or by those precedents which govern a scrupulously trained intellect. I left him to furnish the information. My business was to digest it quick as a flash and use it, then to prove my contention or to reject it for the same reason. I do not know what a casuist is, but he

frequently accused me of being one, as if this was a fault of which I should be ashamed. But I never was. This grieved him. I am sure he felt that I would not overcome a certain vulgar insolence of ignorance, because I had no native reverence for learning.

Once when I was belaying the ancient Greeks like a ruffian he assumed the dignified manner of a gentleman and a scholar who must be patient with a Smart Aleck. As near as I can recall, this is the gist of that altercation:

‘You do yourself discredit when you speak disparagingly of an illustrious people,’ he said.

I knew nothing of their civilization, art, or literature. Then he went on to pay a tribute to the Greek intellect. It was symmetrical, dignified, and beautiful as their architecture. Had I ever studied the glory and simplicity of the Parthenon? I admitted that I had not, but I was willing to concede that they had highly developed artistic instincts. Which, I had to infer, was the wrong phrase to use.

‘They had brains, brains!’ he retorted hotly.

‘I would no more revere a man for his brains than for the hair on his head,’ I shot back; ‘the quality and quantity of both are determined by purely physical conditions, the climate, the food they eat, their habits as human beings. I judge the Greeks by what they have produced.’

‘That is precisely what you cannot do intelligently, because you do not know what they produced.’

‘Yes, I know the effects —’

'You are profoundly ignorant of the effects of Greek culture upon the world,' he interrupted.

'Culture' was one of Lundy's words, never a favorite with me. I am not denying there is such a thing, but whether it is beneficent depends in my opinion upon the moderation with which you absorb it and balance it with better, sturdier elements of character, like honest bigotry and hard-headed convictions. It is a boastful word with a bad reputation in advanced stages of civilization. It too frequently became the elegance by which the distance between morality and immorality is shortened.

Lundy, however, loved it, with no such barbaric instincts as I had to warn him against it. And I suffered much from the personal uses he made of it during what may be called the Hellenic period of our married life.

This time I made a clean sweep and cut Greek culture to the bone.

'There was something wrong with their culture,' I returned, 'because they did not survive it as a nation. Men are destroyed by their own minds, their systems of thought. What the ancient Greeks produced with all their art and learning and culture are these modern Greeks. I do not think much of them. Neither do you. They have the same hair, the same brains. They are out of the same stock, but virtue has gone out of them. They are no longer sculptors and philosophers. Nobody quotes them or imitates them. The fatalistic mind back of all their culture made slaves and little men of their descendants.'

Lundy regarded me for a moment in regretful silence, as we sometimes measure some one who is dear to us who is determined not to be like us.

‘Corra,’ he said reproachfully, ‘you have an underhanded mind. You deliberately missed my point.’

‘I made my own point, which was better than being run through by yours,’ I laughed.

Then I had to listen to his explanation of how there were now no Greeks of that breed. The Persians had destroyed that great race.

His scholarly indignation frequently rose to the pitch of sarcasm. But I was never abashed. I could not be made to hang my head mentally or to feel what is now called the inferiority complex. If you can finance the outrageous courage of ignorance with a certain secret wisdom of your own, you stand a very good chance of disconcerting a learned man in an argument. I always came out of these intellectual scimmages exhilarated like a ragged young sparrow that has enjoyed an upward flight upon an eagle’s wings.

One little trait I venture to record by way of illustrating how shrewd a woman’s mind can be at ducking out of sight at the right moment. Lundy was resentful like most learned men — or unlearned for that matter — if it appeared that I was about to get the better of the contention. He felt the trickery of wit at his expense, a petticoated Puck putting Bottom’s head on a wise man’s shoulders. Intellectual rage caused him to blink. Whenever he regarded me with this fluttering blue gaze I cast the argu-

ment aside, rushed to him, laid my head upon his knees as these knees were the executioner's block and invited him to strike in case he desired to make such a disposition of a fool. In such a manner I was always able to restore the equilibrium of love and charity between us without his ever suspecting that this was balm I laid upon his wounded vanity.

I have now a certain misty tinge of time in the colors of my mind, elegant wisps of culture, pseudo evidences of learning obtained from my association with Lundy. I have practically no accurate information on any subject, which is one reason I so rarely burden the reader with a quotation; but I have the sense and feeling of all these things Lundy studied in his lifetime to learn. I walked for years in the rich pastures of his mind.

XXIII

THE YEAR IN OXFORD

As the years passed there were happier periods, all of which have been recorded in 'My Book and Heart.' The years in Oxford, for example.

More than one circumstance contributed to the relaxation I enjoyed there. The prim academic life of the little college town was stimulating and refreshing to me after the hard and lean years in the itineracy. We were relieved from the burden of souls, and Lundy was absorbed in his work as teacher of Greek in the college. This is the one interest he had that I could not share. I had worried and prayed with him through all the Gospels, but when it came to feeling my way through the enclitics and iota subscripts of a dead cross-stitch language I had no conscience about leaving him to his fate.

Now that I look back, this is a queer circumstance, that I never had the least ambition to keep pace with my husband mentally. I was not uneasy lest he should escape me by this route, as I always felt he might do in those frightfully arduous pilgrimages he made toward God in the spirit. Anything might happen to such a traveler, I feared. But I have always enjoyed the assurance of having a very dexterous mind, regardless of whether I had as much information or intellectual training as the other person had or not.

This is no more a conceit than a man feels in the strength of his muscles. He is not disposed to skin the cat in order to prove his physical power. He is much more apt to sit down comfortably observant while some weaker man boasts of his biceps. I have done a lot of that kind of sitting down in my life. Nothing fans me into such a state of peaceful mental somnambulance as the intellectual antics of a person who displays his learning, not from vanity always, but frequently because it is all he has got; no real sense, no wisdom of his own, merely much good stuff he has learned from other sources. He spreads it like a garment as any other decent person would to hide the thinness of his shanks.

The literary life of Oxford was the most youthful and strident feature of this old college town. I do not know how the dean of the English department contrived to mislead so many young men, but year after year a certain per cent of the senior class were imbued with the idea that they had some kind of gift for literary creation or literary criticism. The latter predominated. During the winter months they shook the very battlements of English literature. They spared nobody from Henry Fielding to Dickens. Never shall I forget the way the feathers of the Brontë sisters used to fly when half a dozen of these young whelps seized upon 'Jane Eyre.' I was in my George Eliot stage at the time and suffered a graver mind, but I recall with no flattery to myself the part I took in these discussions. There may be such a thing as a mature mind under the age of forty, but if so it is the result of premature

gray matter. I was still in the adolescent period mentally and found great refreshment in the group of young-rooster intellectuals who frequently came to the house. We worked out our theories and opinions on one another as growing children wrestle.

Oxford was a narrow-minded little community, but it was pigeon-breasted morally. The only disciple of Zola in the town was an innocent young man from Arkansas, who had been well grounded in his morals. He was by way of becoming a novelist at that time, but turned out to be a historian. He graduated in vain from the English departments of five universities and was finally reduced to recording facts and dates and rewriting information that he could not digest. It was a form of mental regurgitation. A great many people have it. The one rash thing he ever did was to espouse the cause of realism in fiction, which none of us knew or cared enough to attack. He came in frequently to discuss the subject with me, chiefly, I suppose, because no one else would listen to him.

I have always been interested in bores. They are in my opinion the strangest of human phenomena, probably the one type of character impossible to dramatize. Has any one ever read a novel entitled 'The Bore'? You have not, because the creative mind cannot produce him. He is automatic mentally. He can learn, frequently more than an intelligent man, but he cannot think. He is without imagination and the personal messengers of sensibility. He never knows or suspects how the other fellow feels. Poor D—— could talk indefinitely in

a sensible monotone without the glint of a thought to brighten his durable conversation. To me it has ever been fascinating to watch a good brain work that was totally disconnected from life, charm, or personality.

Everything was settled except the relative merits of the new school of realism in fiction as compared to the old school of romanticism. This was a burning question then. As I remember, Émile Zola was the father of the realists. He had written a particularly disgusting novel, the title of which I do not recall; but one scene in it I am compelled against my will to remember — which, I suppose, proves that Zola was indeed a realist, because I have forgotten ten thousand lines of poetry that entranced me more.

This was a description of the decomposed body of a soldier plowed up on a battlefield after the Franco-Prussian War. Zola omitted not one worm from this picture. Yorick's skull was a clean white bone as compared with this horrible pollution of what had been a man. He made realism stink for five pages. I shall never be willing to confound this monstrous insensate vitalizing of the processes of death with the convincing romanticism of life, which is what the best literature is. However, my opinion is prejudiced in this matter, for I am an incurable romanticist, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last breath I draw. I think the world of life is one bright illusion conferred upon us by a good God, and that if it becomes anything else, that also is an illusion by which we damn ourselves.

I have a vague recollection of Cæsar or some such

person having said that the Romans were made indolent and effeminate by the importation of luxuries from the provinces — a free translation, but the gist of what he meant. I cannot tell what might have happened to me if we had gone on living in Oxford and if Lundy had continued to hold the chair of Greek in Emory College. We were as poor as possible, but I had my little luxuries from the various provinces of literature. Every college community titters with quotations from the best writers and speakers. I was subject during this period to short-flighted aspirations, such, for example, as trying to understand prosody. But I could make nothing of this science of poetry, not even with Lundy's illuminating assistance. I remember at another time reading Guizot's 'History of France.' This was a real experience and came near starting me to thinking. There is something in the quality of the French mind to which I have always felt a reluctant kinship. They are the only people I know who can leap into an enormous vocabulary of words and beat them up with the wings of their spirit into a fine hysterical eloquence.

I cannot tell how I missed my cue, but my suspicion now is that I must have made a more or less deliberate effort to develop mentally. I do recall regretfully certain intellectual flutterings which are never to be confounded with the stirrings of the creative mind.

When it is all over, or nearly over, and we look back with the wisdom of all our experiences gained, we know that love is the best thing in life and that

it leads through whatever shadows to the best things we are capable of. So I know now that my devotion to little Faith was more stimulating and informing than anything else.

In contrast to this tender happiness I enjoyed as a mother, I was never free from a nameless fear and anxiety for my husband. It turned out that his duties as the head of the Greek department in the college did not divert his mind from that absorbing passion for peace in God. Rather the fatalism of the Greek mind reacted disastrously upon his own mind. In addition to this his vitality was depleted by overwork. No matter how pale saints are — and I have observed that as a rule they have poor complexions — I shall always contend that it is easier to step up and trust the Lord if you are in good health. Lundy's strength began to fail and he passed more frequently into those dark periods of despair. So I labored with him in good faith according to his interpretation of the Scriptures. I remember now the premonitions I had of unimaginable misfortunes.

Years passed and our fate had come upon us, driving us far from our little world at Oxford before I finally realized that this was not a spiritual condition from which Lundy suffered, but a very real and dangerous disorder of the mind; melancholia, which took one form after another of religious mania.

I have written out in another place the life we lived during this period, but not the terror and silence that fell upon me. This cannot be set down in words; the frantic efforts I made to save him from

himself, and to protect him from that terrible world in the Church. I know where the spirit of all tragedies dwells — in the silence which you dare not break, with even one call for help. I contracted the habit of holding my breath in these years of suspense. Even when my body slept it seemed to me my heart was forever sitting up with Lundy in the dark hours of the night.

This was long before the Great War, but I distinctly recall how I used to wish I could find relief in a real battle, see the dreadful face of my enemy and feel his wounds rather than face the powers and principalities of Lundy's terrible darkness.

I fell sick under the strain and lay at the very doors of death for a long time, but not wishfully. I survived the predictions of various physicians for no other reason, I believe, than that I felt obliged to live and stand by my husband.

I did it. No one can say I failed him or ever drew back once from the shadows that finally engulfed him. I had written 'A Circuit Rider's Wife' and put the crown he so richly deserved upon him before he passed away. I remember being in a hurry to do that.

Nothing was further from my plans than to become a writer, but I must have already begun the practice of studying characters, for I remember all those people whom I knew then, not their faces but their attributes, their inside minds. Otherwise, I am inclined to believe now that this was not an important period in my own mental development. It seems to me that I had very little raiment on my

thoughts, not much sweetness or color. That bright and halcyon past which came back to me later in a dark time was eclipsed by some sort of adolescent egotism of the mind. I remember being very smart, which is a form of stupidity. I try not to remember it, but it occurs to me that I may have felt intellectual. I entertained views too noble or too bitter to be true. I must have done some soul-stretching of my mental neck.

Nothing that I have ever written about myself humbles me so much as this confession, for I have observed the same state of mind in others. It is ugly, insincere, and leads to maudlin movements, agitations, and other disorders of our times, especially among women. The wonder to me now is that I did not get the idea that I had a message for the world. God in his mercy saved me from feminine screech of this emotion which so many of us mistake for noble inspiration.

XXIV

HOMELY PLEASURE

I WAS thirty years of age before the character of my mind differed consciously from that of any other woman's mind who is a devoted wife and mother, and, by marriage, deeply and sincerely pious. I was backward with my needle, but necessity compelled me to become skillful in this art. I made my own clothes and they proclaimed the fact. But I was more successful with dear little Faith's things. She came up in the drawn-line period. We could not afford linen, but every ruffle and hem on her white muslin frocks was hemstitched. The gathers were rolled and whipped. The yokes were elaborately carved with the needle into blossoms and webs worked into the drawn threads.

Faith was an adorable mite of a woman from the very beginning of her life. She felt her feathers and could not resist the joy of switching when she pranced forth in one of these dresses. I wore the long skirts of that period and held them up behind after the manner of those former ladies. Likewise, Faith invariably reached back, caught a fold of her exceedingly abbreviated skirt between her thumb and forefinger, the other three fingers hoisted and curled as daintily as if she held an afternoon teacup. Then, bent slightly forward, head thrown proudly back, she frisked forth glorified in her own pride. It comforts me now to remember that I never

chided her for these airs and that she had the joy of her things.

They really were beautiful little garments, if I do say it who should not boast of my handiwork. You may have observed that love can impart to a woman who has no sense of style about her own clothes, a rare genius for dressing her girl child.

I had no domestic accomplishments, but I had one hard-and-fast rule as a loving wife. This was to appeal to the eye. I have a vaguely guilty feeling that I was not an exquisitely neat housekeeper — which immediately became a belligerent feeling the moment some one referred to the fact — but I always kept one place attractive in the house that would strike Lundy's eye as he entered the door.

I remember once after we had left Oxford and our fortunes were at the lowest ebb we lived in two rooms far up in the mountains. I had saved his dearer books, some draperies and precious ornaments from the sale of our household things in Oxford, but not enough to furnish a whole room cheerfully. So I massed our wealth in one corner of it.

There was an ugly little stove set far enough out to admit of a seat behind it on both sides of the corner. I had it put in, no more than a low wide shelf against the wall. But it was softly cushioned and I covered it with a dark blue chenille curtain. I covered some old sofa pillows with the red-and-yellow borders of these curtains and piled them like gaudy mushrooms on this seat. Some distance above I put in narrow shelves for the books. These were

arranged without regard for their titles or inside substance, but to bring out as much color as possible. A red or green backed book was precious and must be placed where the light would fall on it.

There was a vase on the top shelf, two brass candlesticks, and wedged in the corner was a remarkable plaster-of-Paris little boy, quite naked, sitting cross-legged on a square pedestal, reading from a large book open upon his knees. I take it that he was an erudite child, because from the looks of his pouncy body he could not have been more than three years old. Lundy had given me this thing in an opulent moment years before. Remembering the classical Greek turn of his mind, I cannot believe it truly represented his taste, only what he could afford to buy. But he craved statuary of the graver sort to the last and treated himself now and then to the moulded bust of a great poet or a great philosopher. I keep them all, though the little boy has lost half his book, broken off long since in our travels.

Two very wide chenille curtains remained. These were split and hung at the windows on either side of this corner. I do not suppose a professional decorator would have admired the general effect, but compared with the remaining space and furnishing of that wretched room, it was palatial.

On very cold evenings when Lundy came in, the stove would be glowing like a grotesquely deformed red-hot coal. The two candles would be lighted and flickering bravely. The little boy high up in his corner between them would still be studiously read-

ing his book. The books on the shelves below would be lined up brightly like old friends waiting as usual to spend the evening with us. And Lundy, merely giving me the peck of a kiss as he passed, would make straight for that long cushioned seat behind the stove. He stretched out there like a wealthy man and read or scribbled notes for a sermon. I do not think he ever really saw the other part of that wretched room.

This was the life I lived then and the mind I had then. Good, tender and very anxious for my dear ones, but not by any stretch of imagination an intellectual existence. I doubt if we can be very active in such a love affair as this and be intellectual at the same time. Love itself is the self-expression of such a woman, which is something we hear more about these days than in those days, when it seems to me women loved more giftedly than they do now.

LOVE AND AUTHORSHIP

MOTHERS are especially methodical. Love makes them and tempers their minds in the beginning. They find out how to love each one of their little children differently, then they settle down in their maternal formulas of affection. These children grow up, their natures change, but this makes no difference. She remembers that Thomas was a sensitive little boy and had to be treated tenderly. So she goes on making allowances for his beautiful, sensitive nature, although he may have grown up into a cold-blooded wretch who has made his fortune on a widow's mite.

By the same token, she never forgets that her other son was a normal hard-headed youngster who must be disciplined and required no petting. So she goes on giving him the lick and the promise of a sterner affection, although he may now be a broken-hearted man who has failed on account of going into business with the meaner, more excitable brother, and is very much in need of tenderness. But she apportioned her affections between them like an estate she willed them long ago. Now she is too old and *non compos mentis* affectionally to change her will.

Authors do their work the same way. They find out how to write. They get their own method, a certain set of characters, and they stick to this method and these characters, with a few lay figures

added here and there in different stories. What I mean is that their leading heroes and heroines show a marked family resemblance to one another in every succeeding book. And why not? They are all out of the same parent mind. I should recognize a certain author's heroine anywhere on earth, even if she escapes from all the stories in which she figures. She is a young woman who usually works her way up, when the reader has every reason to believe she is bound to fall. I have not seen her lately, but she used to make me very anxious on account of her threadbare skirt and having to heat a can of tomato soup over an alcohol burner behind her washstand screen. I do hope she has kept her chastity and married well as usual these late years, since I have been too busy to keep up with her struggles. She was a model and an inspiration then to every working girl without a job. Which, when you think about it, is very high praise for her procreator.

I had been one of the most diligent unknown authors in this country for ten years before circumstances thrust me into the written rôle of 'A Circuit Rider's Wife.' It was then that I seemed to have found myself as an interpreter and at last capable of producing that literature of the heart which is peculiar to all of us. I am not wholly in my right mind in any other character now. She knows the very gist of everything I feel or know about men and women.

I would not attempt to tell how earnestly and unsuccessfully I have tried to be a younger, lovelier, and more attractive woman in fiction. Being a

youthful, coquettish heroine is frightfully hypocritical and embarrassing. If I am compelled to play that rôle, I always put that dearer, wiser old woman in as a neighbor to the girl so that I may rest and dwell in her for a scene now and then.

I am far removed these many years from the circumstances that made the 'Circuit Rider's Wife.' She was very poor and enjoyed her economies; I am now no longer poor, but cannot bring myself to commit an extravagance. She walked very softly before the Lord, and I walk even more softly before the world, on account of having attracted some attention from that quarter which she never had. She was always anxious for the peace and fate of her circuit rider; now I am lonely for the lack of these cares, and Lundy has passed away into what may be called the literature of my soul. She went to church every Sabbath day, and I do not go. Nevertheless she constrains me. Sometimes even yet the mind she had comes back to me like a song and I am tempted to sit down in the amen corner of my years, tell everything that is comforting to know, sing a hymn and try to lead us all in prayer! I seem to slip off into that same old-fashioned tenderness for men and women we used to feel for mourners kneeling about the altar during a revival.

Then the woman I am now looks about me and takes a more sensible view. What the world really needs is to have its emotional nature disciplined and trained even more carefully than we take the pains to develop the purely mental faculties. Praying will not meet this emergency.

My hope is to get at least ten strides ahead of this woman I used to be in the record I am now writing of my mind, which has changed considerably since she managed its downsittings and uprisings.

The question is whether I can do it. As we grow older it seems to me we break none of the bonds that formerly bound us; we simply add to them. I doubt very seriously if there is any such experience as liberty. It is a notion we get from not remembering for a moment the habits that bind us no less in the spirit than in our more obvious affairs.

XXVI

THE MIND OF THE WRITER

I HAD been writing ten years before I discovered the amazing capacity even the ordinary mind has for creating from experience and memory, and that its powers of production are limited only by one's courage to think, and by the amount of physical strength and endurance one can afford to spend on the performance. After the 'Circuit Rider's Wife' was written I was in the gravest state of anxiety lest I should never muster the material for another book.

About this time I met an old friend who now holds the chair of metaphysics in one of our great universities. I may have given some intimation of my despairing state. In any case, he instructed me in the laws governing mind. He drew a diagram of my mind on a piece of paper and showed me how it worked. I had only one consolation as I studied this thing — that he did not know or suspect the thoughts I was thinking about him at that moment. They were not complimentary.

I rejected his theory, but I could not get the picture of his infernal diagram out of my mind. Every time I sat down to work at my desk, I could see the lines and segments of my mind on that piece of paper and the dot where a thought would probably appear. The result was a hysteria of self-consciousness mentally which made thinking impossible. Quite by accident that great student hit upon the

method of obstructing thought. The mind turned like a worm on itself!

In my opinion it is wiser not to fumble with this delicate piece of machinery, no matter how much you may find out by tearing it to pieces. What I know is that he who peeps at his mind will never have the use of it. It is wiser to leave not only your mind but your gender severely alone if you hope to do good spirit-level thinking. It would not surprise me at all if these were not the bonds which do somehow bind us to God, to be accepted, but not understood.

After all is said and done and taught that we can possibly learn from others, every man faces his own problems and solves them the best way he can. The lawyer learns law, then he practices law according to the bias of his own mind and character. Maybe he is a shyster. Maybe he has an honest legal sense. It all depends on the kind of man he is. The same thing is true about the physician. After a while he gets his own mental habits of diagnosing our complaints and diseases. If his mind catches and holds some fixed idea about neurasthenic tendencies, apt as not he will diagnose your case accordingly, although you may be having fits on account of an ulcer in the stomach. In any case, he finally works out a system of favorite prescriptions. Then he fits us to his medicines, and his methods as he grows older, no matter how new our disease may be. He cannot help it. His mind has made him and it is too old, inelastic, to add another cubit to his wisdom or courage as a physician. If you are about to become a patient, the risks are six of one and half a dozen of

the other whether you choose a young doctor in the experimental stage of his practice or this old one who has settled down in his methods, because they are reasonably successful and rarely ever result in your death.

Preachers are the same way. They see God according to their lights, make sermons until they exhaust their vision. Then they go on preaching this same body of thought as long as they live under various texts from the Scriptures.

I am wondering how a literary critic would go about reviewing the mind of an author instead of his book. He would probably decline the assignment. He is a judge of the material, the copy a writer produces, but he is no mental mechanic to pass judgment upon the amazing motor of our faculties. The best he could do would be to write an illuminating essay upon the times in which an author lived; the effect, by inference, of that particular period of civilization upon his work; whether he was well and in good circumstances, or wrote under the pressure of ill-health and poverty.

But none of these circumstances would account for the main fact that he became an author instead of, say, a fishmonger or a banker. The great majority of poor people or sick people never take it out on the world by writing books. Neither does their state of health determine their literary style or their choice of material to convert into copy. Robert Louis Stevenson was an invalid, suffering from an incurable malady. By all the laws governing such a life he was due to die early without accomplishing

anything. But he sat up in bed and wrote the healthiest, most entrancing stories of his times, and died later.

The mind is something else, not us. It is an instrument set up in us, controlled by spiritual forces which reach it through the medium of our emotions. It can be well and powerful when we are weak and ill. 'By my spirit,' thus also sayeth such a man. On the other hand, the mind is frequently ill to the point of dissolution when we are enjoying perfect health. Witness the sickly slime copy produced by a decadent writer who may be an athlete physically. 'By my spirit,' also says such a man who has adopted his powers and principalities of darkness. My notion is that it is a choice between spirits which determines the quality of your thinking, but not the power with which you can do it. That, I suppose, is the personal equation in the whole phenomenon and would depend upon the strength of your emotions and the capacity of your mental motor.

It is not for me to venture into the realm of metaphysics with my cheerful, flat-footed ignorance of this subject, but I am now writing the record of my own mind in relation to my work as an author merely from experience. The conclusions I have reached in this manner may be erroneous from the standpoint of the professional students. But I have frequently erred with the happiest practical results in my own living and achieving.

I remember being very much upset upon learning that poetry, religion, and sex animation were all products of the same emotional reactions. This was

a serious matter. If I could not dispose of it in a manner satisfying to my mental and moral platform in living, it would take the luster off my thoughts and render me some sort of automaton in spiritual consciousness. You are not really the author of a thought which splashes up like spray from a wave of emotion which has its origin in sex. This information was too diminishing. Also, I prefer to believe in God, not because of my sex, even if I was of the other sex, but because I have a spiritual consciousness which only the idea of Providence can satisfy.

Still, I had a squeamish feeling that we probably were made precisely by this economical pattern, one emotion carrying all our sensations; thrift in expenses being one of the axioms in creation as I have observed it.

Any sensible person must have reached the same conclusion I reached, provided he did not consult too many learned authorities, but stuck like a leech to his Scriptures, which was something like this: By nature, delicacy, and decency, by all prayers, every hope and noble ambition, the sensations of sex are so mixed in us with the highest emotions of religion, eloquence, and every sublime imagination that we have been for ages the parents of spiritually minded beings instead of brutes.

I suppose this was the only way to insure such a phenomenon in an apparently physical and carnal world. We are thus born convinced of immortality by that admirable device of the Almighty. I am ready to stretch a neck ahead of the current animal

propaganda concerning sex and contend that it is probably the basic principle of the instinct we have of immortality. How else does the lowest type of savage also arrive at faith in God and keep company with ghosts and spirits? Superstition is the name we apply to that, when it may be a much sounder, though more elemental, faith than we have ourselves. In any case, how do you account for the character of his superstitions or for his ability to produce them at all? He has no Bible, no literature, neither theologians nor scholars to direct his mental processes. But he has his emotions. He is some kind of stick-in-the-mud poet, and he arrives at the idea of God because he is a man. A dog cannot do it, though he has the same procreating instinct, but is not informed with the spiritual sense.

These conclusions have given me great satisfaction as a writer. I am never embarrassed if a particularly entrancing thought comes to me. I do not attribute it to the inspirations of my gender, but to the spiritual quality of the mind produced by gender in general, if you will have it so, not that I am personally disposed to dig down to the rudiments of my thoughts. Some mysteries are sacred so long as they are hidden, but shocking when they are exposed. It seems to me that the tendency of our times is to suspect sex of something which is really good, but that we are inclined to make something bad of what we suspect.

XXVII

DO YOU WANT TO WRITE?

I SHOULD be slow to advise the most gifted person to enter the literary profession. It is a life of infinite labor and hardship. The rewards are commensurate if you win them. But comparatively few who strive to enter in do so. Nobody lacks the sense to write, I believe; but most people lack the intuition, that hidden truth out of which romance and poetry and all literary illusions are made.

Very few people who read books know or suspect the literary casualties in an author's life. The most successful, as the least renowned of us, suffer amazing losses in labor and a corresponding depreciation in self-confidence. You may buy a seat on the stock exchange, get a ticker and do business there according to your own secret information about the market. But you cannot buy a seat among the editors in this country if you are a writer. Neither can you discover the ticker in their mind which determines the worth and unworthiness of your copy. They also are taking a chance with the public which reads. It is a fickle public, apt to change its mind any time.

Nothing is less profitable than to study a magazine with reference to producing copy peculiar to it. You are almost sure to make the mistake of writing something similar to the article or story you have studied, when your common sense should warn you that the editor will not want to repeat that dose.

You have been subtly guilty of a repetition of the motive back of the story you took for a pattern, which is reason enough to expect that the thing will be refused.

An editor must have a kaleidoscopic mind. He cannot tell you with any degree of accuracy what he wants, because he does not know very far in advance what his readers want. But he can tell you as quick as a flash what he does not want, because he has more past experience than you can imagine to guide him in rejecting unavailable copy.

The best bet, I discovered long ago, was to find out what was true and vital in the experience of the greatest number of people and to write that. As a rule it is so old and elemental as to have become identical with them, like a man's ribs. He rarely ever thinks of them. There is such a body of thought and emotion in all of us of which we no longer speak. We have lost the words to do so. But when we see them written out it is as if we had recovered some dearer speech of ourselves.

The language we use is for the obvious, the things we do and say, or for the impressions we wish to make upon others. We have ten thousand dialogues for lovers, a considerable vocabulary for speaking piety and eloquence, and we are not short on narrative sentences; but I challenge any man to prove that it is easy to tell in words what is going on in his mind which is peculiar to him and not to be told. He is thinking them in the same way he breathes to live — by way of being mentally conscious. He is registering himself in every emotion, motive, and

desire faster than these mental sensations can be translated into words.

Language is artificial. We only use it to be heard, or to be seen in the written word, or when we are so moved that we are practically talking to ourselves. The greater part of the thinking we do is so mixed with feeling that it is like a circulatory system of consciousness, therefore the only absolutely veracious mental versions of what we really are.

To set down as much of this copy of us as possible has been my particular business as an author. It requires a sort of loving cunning in the use of words which has been the most fascinating feature of my work. Mere words will not do. They must convey the color, charm, and pulse of life. They must have a private twinkle of wit in them that makes a good-natured noise like laughter through the keyhole of the reader's mind. If you take pains, make every one count like a stroke in the picture of a secret trait which is peculiar to all of us, the individual reader gets the same shock of surprise that he would have if his mother had been eavesdropping his mind. It makes him nervous, wondering how much else she has heard.

As to that, it is like seeing God; you cannot do it without being pure in heart. So I doubt if we could interpret the secret hearts of men and women without feeling very close to them in love and sympathy. My observation of meaner-minded people is that they never really understand other people, only what is evil or potentially evil in them. I reckon it is a blessed provision of Providence that we only see

through the glass darkly when our deeds are evil. Otherwise the wicked would have a frightful advantage over the innocent and good.

One of the most profitable experiments I make along this line is to write out good impulses peculiar to people who are not good, but have a perpetual hankering after their might-have-been virtues.

They invariably rise like woefully undone children to the bait. I get a batch of letters from sinners the moment such a paragraph picture of their futile goodness appears in print. Some of them very smart and bitter, but feeling that soothing plaster I have laid on the wounds their sins have made in them. Others are low in the dust. They do not expect to rise. Still, they want me to know they have enjoyed the relief of a few tears on their cheeks.

I do think this is a dear thing about men, even the worst of them — how they will confess their tears of grief or regret to a woman in whom they believe or whose confidence they desire to win. If she is an elderly person with some wisdom of their sex, she knows that these are histrionic tears, shed to move her. Still, it is an artless sort of compliment they pay her good old simplicity. But if we should tell how many men and which men we have seen weep, the world would never believe us! The poor things are driven to it as we are driven to little hysterical manifestations with our dearer men which we should never try to put over on another woman. Before other men they must play the part of pride, strength, and courage, even if they have no such attributes; but once in so often the last of them will

break down before one of us, quiver his chin and let his tears flow, because he knows that we know he is really a child who never grows up, begging for cake when he is a boy and for sympathy when he is a man.

Very few lost and undone women ever show up, but now and then one comes in a letter, lays her head on my Circuit Rider's Widow's knees and whispers that she remembers when she felt like that, referring to some paragraph, say, in 'My Book and Heart.' This is as near as one of them ever comes to admitting that she no longer has the right to feel like that. And none of them ever sign their names. Thus they let you know they do not expect an answer. It is their sad way of walking like ghosts for a few lines close to what they believe is a kind heart.

It must be fearful not to be good if you are a woman, because you never can forgive yourself, while a man can and will do so with the least encouragement from you. If the woman he loves shrives him, he will rise up and strut like a spiritual peacock without ever taking the trouble to lay his case before the Lord in prayer. He is the greatest economist in contrition the world ever saw.

But when you think about it, this only goes to prove how transparent they are. I am by men as I am by the more occult Scriptures — they are not difficult to understand if you have the right mind toward them, not antagonistic or suspicious.

But I am always careful never to let one know I am reading him. Nothing upsets a man so quickly as to realize that you are seeing him maneuver in and out of sight behind the lines of the rôle he is reciting

so well to you. He is offended. He takes his leave of you like a puppy with its tail between its legs, or he goes off with a prideful stride. Presently he tells somebody that he does not like that woman. But he does. He simply dislikes the glimpse he had of himself mirrored in her old Sea-of-Galilee mind.

I never answer such letters. Let them read Paul's epistles! But I do feel closer kin to them than one ever does to the comfortable saints or to the brazenly virtuous.

When you have been a mother and known such richness of hovering love as that, after you are childless the wings of your heart do feel strangely empty. I have sometimes considered adopting a bunch of bad grown-up children and starting them all over at their A B C's of morals and decencies. But it would never do. This whole countryside would be working presently with runaway children. I have a vague suspicion that I am not an easy person to live with. I have a hot and heady temper, and exacting standards acquired in these lonely hills where there is no world to obstruct or soften my convictions about what is right or wrong, and about the exceedingly early hour when dutiful people should get up and go about their tasks. As the stepmother of sinners I might be rather terrible in my manifestations. Besides, I could not love them as a real mother loves. I should lack that essential wisdom in dealing with them. So I have abandoned the idea, except to think about it.

XXVIII

EXPRESSING ONE'S SELF

PERSONALLY, I do not think so much of self-expression as a noble yearning. I would not go so far as to suggest that it is a wave of feminine psychosis; but the suspicion grows in my mind that it may be a sort of hysteria peculiar to that class of people who have boastful souls and considerable mortal vanity, neither of which can be financed by the finer art of living privately. We notice it in women now, as we do other symptoms which were formerly characteristic only of men. Job had a notable case of it. He fretted his wife until at last she lost patience with his groaning vanity about his integrity and advised him to curse God and die. Carlyle made his wife miserable while he expressed himself like a winged leviathan in 'Sartor Resartus.' It is easier to write an epic than to live your own life becomingly with no audience to cheer the performance. Therefore we are a trifle long on epics and short on achieving a good record of ourselves in secret. Women have at last become infected with this disorder of the mind, a pathetic desire to cast themselves on the wide screen of the world in some rôle of self-expression.

My mail has been laden with letters from them for years asking advice about how to do it. They are either distracted spinsters or married women who are childless and unhappy. Their homes and their husbands have got on their nerves. They are

the pseudo heroines of their own sorrows, futile egotists in tears who wish to publish their tears in a book. They have only a martyr illusion of themselves and no sense at all of other people. They are totally lacking in that quality of the medium without which there is no such thing as a truthful interpretation of any life. God himself could not teach such a woman to write an honest sentence about herself, much less her husband, concerning whom she is determined to reveal the worst.

Recently a mean little wife with a soul-pulling use of words sent in a long account of her grievances. She had married beneath her own position in life. Her husband was an honest man, but not — oh, not a gentleman! He did not understand or appreciate her. He was cruel, contemptuous, and overbearing. Judging by the way she praised herself, it was easy to infer that she was one of those women who make a damnable use of their virtues and would not lend one for any consideration to her husband. I suppose she wore that sad accusative look which provokes the worst in any man. She felt that it might relieve the tension if she could find some means of self-expression and she wanted advice about writing the revelations of her married life.

On account of being partly Irish, I am not always able to resist the temptation to use the shillalah of my wit upon these little Judases.

‘Do not write the record of your wrongs,’ I advised her; ‘but meet your husband with a smile the next time he comes in and strike him over the head with some blunt instrument. He will probably

clean you up, which is precisely what you need. This will much more quickly relieve your nervous tension than writing a book, which is a drastic business and very hard on the nerves, even when you tell the truth.'

The women's organizations have a less sensational way of cashing in these unhappy ones. They give them a task to perform in connection with their vast activities. They are doing everything, maintaining schools and clinics, they are lobbying for bills. They are the most rapacious collectors for charity on earth. They have their publicity departments and their propaganda. They are setting up monuments and preserving the memory of honorable men. They almost invariably do what they set out to do and they are the only corporations in this country that get their labor free of charge, that even collect dues from their workers — which will indicate the fierce passion in the women of our times to achieve worthy ends and to express themselves in honorable service before the world, whatever happens to their homes, husbands, and children.

No one respects them more than I do, but a burned child is afraid of fire. For so many years I did not have the use of my own life. It was controlled entirely by the rules of the Methodist Church and limited by the adversities of a circuit-rider's life. Never in this world would I yield it to the executive committee of any kind of woman's board. I am a woman myself and know very well how much greater our talent is for governing others than the most despotic form of government founded by men.

My idea is that the good little life, with no publicity screen in the background, leads with less confusion and certainly less embarrassment to peace and happiness.

The theory is excellent and does me credit written out in words. But a master mind could never put into words the web I have spun upon it to ensnare my own life, liberty, and happiness.

For years past I have felt my immortal spirit zooming in it like an insect with its legs tied. No woman ever longed for self-expression as I long now to escape from my own plan of happiness.

XXIX

SITTING IN THE PUBLIC EYE

I COULD have been contented with intimate blessings. I do not remember ever to have craved a career. I do not now understand those who strive so brilliantly and senselessly for recognition, fame, and one sort of distinction or another.

For me the career of an author was purely accidental and resulted from a desperate emergency. I have written all this out more particularly in another book, but while we are on this subject of careers and recognition I may as well set down now what I have to say about that.

Anything you do, however well, which draws the world's attention is a fearful thing, not to be lightly sought. And I do not refer in this connection to the competitive jealousies engendered by success, having had no experiences along this line. What I am trying to tell you is that with the rewards one earns in this business some right to live privately passes away. Your habitation may be divided from the crowded world by a thousand hills, but there are voluntary biographers in it who create the life they think you live back there. I could write much more entrancing legends about myself.

I have an ambition to sit gracefully in the public eye, one hand resting on my desk, neatly littered with manuscript, and the other curled like a white lily across my breast. When you are posing thus in

your own mind it is disconcerting to learn that you are a country policeman, conscientious in the discharge of your duties. I respect policemen, but I should shrink from crowding into that profession.

If you have written much testifying to your Christian faith, even if you do admit a somewhat crank-sided human nature, it is depressing to learn that you are an atheist smoking with bad doctrines.

After that happened, I had no sooner retired behind that Scripture which says, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you, for my sake . . . for great is your reward in heaven' — and I am taking particular satisfaction in the dark intimation as to the probable nature of this reward — than I was startled by the report that I had become a Catholic. This is a compliment which I shall never deserve, even though I am totally lacking in Protestant animus against the Catholics. If you have been one of those certified widows so highly recommended in Paul's epistle to Timothy it feels very queer to hear that you have been cutting a swath in the social life of Havana.

Not everything you hear about yourself can be considered good publicity. And if you have delicate sensibilities, the currycomb of public imagination frequently rubs your vanities the wrong way.

You can never choose your own duties or pastimes again. You must work at your thoughts. They hold you and compel you like voices calling to be heard.

Sometimes now I still feel the womanly instinct

stirring in me to sew a fine seam. I want to lay a pattern on a piece of beautiful cloth, cut out something sweet and make it. I long to gather a ruffle with my fingers, pin one end of it down and scratch the gathers with my needle as I used to do long ago. But I never can do it. No time. No such cunning left now in my fingers. I have become a sewless woman.

When it is a fine, large, perfectly rounded day, with the sun shining and all the leaves talking in the wind and a faint perfume of woodland flowers floats in through the window like an invitation, I would give much to cast my pen far from me and follow it out and away to the deep green valleys where these blossoms bloom. But I cannot take the day off. I must stay here and write down the things my mind makes believe. No real blossoms, only the things I know — so little, compared with what the trees tell and the river sings, if you know how to listen.

Every author knows what I mean. We become the slaves of our thoughts that must be written before they fade into forgetfulness.

Invitations to speak upon public occasions are among my most grievous embarrassments. Why is it inferred that one is or can be a public speaker because she has written a book? Writing is a very private business. I do not know any other occupation which requires so much privacy unless it is a life of prayer or a life of crime.

During these many years with a bee in my bonnet and a pen in my hand I have practically lost my oral faculties. I cannot scintillate on a rostrum.

The flare of so many faces would put out my light. I am accustomed to work in the presence of three open-eyed windows which look upon a wide green forest. Much motion and life out there, but complete and magnificent indifference to the mortal mind in here struggling with the adverb of an idea.

I am not apologizing, you understand, for not being able to live up to this side demand of a literary reputation. I am simply telling what happens to one not anxious to dine on her own fame in a public place. Many people will not believe an author shrinks from committing this act of sublimated cannibalism, because so many of them do it, especially the English writers imported by our women's clubs. But I cannot be made to believe they enjoy the performance. One must have spent a while in England, realized how repressed their enthusiasms are, for Americans to understand how these speakers must suffer from our goggle-eyed reverence for their voice culture, their outrageous pronunciations and their perfectly exquisite intellectuality. Nothing, I believe, but a sense of financial duty to themselves brings them to us.

Meanwhile women are now the best public speakers in this country. They have something to say, and they are saying it with charm and courage. Heaven forbid that I should ever expose my old ruminating mind among them on the stage! What I mean is this: When you write you may take infinite time and patience to say what you want to say. You write in ten different ways. You reface it and begin again and again until the breathless, speech-

less idea you had lives and shines. This is how slow the pen-traveling mind may be; but try fumbling the ball of your thought like that before an audience and see what happens to you! The reporters would be justified in publishing the news that you had a stroke which rendered you practically inarticulate soon after you began your address.

As for preparing an address and delivering it with your eyes and spectacles fixed upon the page instead of the audience, I know this is intolerable, for I have been in many an audience on similar occasions and it has frequently occurred to me that the offending person might have chosen something much better from a book to read.

That which so many people strive to win must be a good thing, but I am simply telling you what fame costs. Once you grow accustomed to being famous, you do not realize it, but you are never quite your humble, honest self. No matter how tight you keep the lid on, there is some watered stock of vanity inside. You are always in danger of the thing's coming off and of giving yourself an air or two. No man or woman was ever so distinguished that this exhibition did not make him ridiculous, especially to those of meaner minds.

But the final and most depressing part comes in the evening of your great day when you are no longer great. Your career has ended. Fame fades like a withered rose in your hair, and you are forgotten even if your works are not. Other writers, whom you naturally feel are not doing so well, are popping up in the public eye.

I am still sufficiently able-bodied in my mind and spirit not to notice the crowding forward of these youngsters; but I have a sort of presentiment that after a while, when I am no longer strong enough to practice nobility of mind, it is going to hurt some to do without the praise and admiration they get. I am dreading the time when I shall be so lonely, so much in need of a little recognition that I may be anxious to accept an invitation to sit on the stage behind the speaker of the evening.

I can feel myself like a pain sitting up there, very old and gray, maybe a little soft in my head, but so pleased to be present and face foremost to the audience! I am waiting for the speaker to conclude his oration and for the applause meant for him to die down. I am hoping like a poor old hungry child that a few people in the audience will recognize me as the author of 'A Circuit Rider's Wife,' or the woman who wrote 'My Book and Heart' many years ago. I am all in a flutter lest no one press forward through the crowd about the speaker and clasp me by my old palsied hand to say how glad he is to see me, and how well I am looking — not a day older! How do I manage to keep so young? And he will never forget when this or that circuit-rider story came out. And how he loves 'My Book and Heart'! Maybe he has just read it all over again. I shall be hoping he will say something like that. Meanwhile I am glowing with childish pleasure at this spoofing, but trying to maintain the air of dignity I used to have when I really was myself.

Heavens, how I do despise those people, now in

the strength of their years, who look with contempt or indifference upon the old children we become!

This is the lightning of fate already flashing in my sky. For I have observed the weather at the end of more than one distinguished career. It rarely ever is very warm and bright. You have outgrown the normal mediocre sense of yourself, and you are no longer able to keep up the intellectual expenses of your reputation as a famous person.

XXX

ON LAYING DOWN YOUR LIFE

I DOUBT if the best people live their own lives. They make themselves the shield and buckler of another's life, or they are the foundations of peace and security upon which many lives are built.

What impresses me is that they seem to pass beyond the reach of any rewards. They lose the capacity to receive or to shine. If the most devoted mother survives the sacrifices she has made, it is with pathetically folded hands, as the spectator of the brilliant careers of her sons and daughters. I suppose mothers get some sort of half joy out of being merely present; but even that is sacrificial, for they are not puffed up over establishing these young ones; they are simply rejoicing in their success. Something has happened to them, they are tragically emptied of self and cannot share the lives they have made.

It is the same way with preachers, priests, prophets, all that class of men who spend themselves for others — they lose the capacity to live. They are those good, quiet shadows in the background everywhere, strangely contented with your fame or your prosperity, not neglected, but used up.

We are very good about making them the objects of our benefits. We get them out and show them off now and then for conscience' sake, but they never really enjoy the parade except to be in our reflected

glory. They are dead to themselves, which is being dead indeed.

Just practice laying down your life for others and see what happens to you! These others will take it, strengthened by you, and go on about their affairs. I have never seen that Scripture fulfilled in this world which reads, 'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake the same shall find it'; so it must be fulfilled in the world to come, which is a long way off and very mysterious, geographically speaking.

Sometimes when I am very low in my mind I get a feeling of terror about the Word. So many Scriptures read like laws every whit as merciless as those which control life in the natural world. All that lives has been and must be fertilized by that decay provided by death. Every flower fades, every leaf falls to enrich the soil for next year's leaves and blossoms. Must we also lay down our lives forever and ever as living sacrifices that those who come after us shall be stronger and wiser to win what we missed of life and happiness? Is no mercy to be shown to the very good? Must they wait to be raised from the dust of all things to receive their rewards?

Such thinking makes me nervous and a trifle indignant about the way those people who do not lay down their lives seem to flourish more than we do who have served long sentences in that wearying position.

I do not know how it may be with women of other sections, but in this part of the country if you do

your own work something goes out of you; not virtue — you are likely to multiply frightfully in virtues — but that bright, fluttering grace of the spirit more becoming to us than all the nobler attributes folds up and disappears. No matter how conscientious she is about setting aside a certain part of each day to improve herself and to keep up with her husband's times — I never knew one to keep up her music — music is one of the things that go out of her — she cannot do it. She is so busy doing her duty she falls fatally behind his times if he is a man who marches with them. I do not know why this is so, but it is probably a feminine geographical phenomenon.

This is a blessed and glorified land; there is a fragrant inertia in our climate suitable more particularly for the production of the sweetly sitting inspirational woman. She does not need to know so much in the way of mere learning in order to be placidly wise. The dust down here is an alluvial soil, humanly speaking; it has been warmed and brightened for so many ages by the sun, the perfume of so many flowers has sunk into it, the sorrows and misfortunes of a great people have sanctified it. My feeling is that it has a cultural quality which must be got through higher education and the most poignant mental exercises in the other sections where it has been spewed up into hoarfrost for a corresponding number of ages, stauncher dust, but not by nature so pleasant when raised, say, into an able citizen, a strong ballot-bearing woman. Therefore it is not so important for our women to exercise

these rights in order to save the country as it is for the abler types in other sections. All they need is two or three of the neater virtues, a prayer capacity in faith, a kind and forgiving heart — and the right look on their faces, effulgent, without being offensively intelligent. I am not one of these, I weep to confess, but I have known such women all my life, as one is acquainted with certain private blessings not shared by the world at large. But I have never known one of them who did all her own work — a noble service diminishing to such a woman.

No matter how correct the pattern of her frock is, or how good her manners are, or how sensible her conversation is, I have never been in the company of one who performed these tasks without becoming immediately aware of the fact, a sort of uneasiness, as if her shoe was pinching her foot. Her seams are too straight. Her draperies do not flow, however voluminous they are. Her eye has a measuring gaze. She feels like the two-edged sword of a just woman made perfect regarding me. Or at the very moment when I am about to confer the bright splash of a thought upon her, my light is put out by the realization that her mind has skipped back home to make sure she did not leave the top off the soda jar and did lock the kitchen door.

I am not complaining of her, you understand; I am endeavoring to compliment her upon her merits. She has all the virtues and you have only your grace in words, a fluttering heart and a mind that climbs her like a clinging vine in conversation. You must lean to her because she will not bend to you. She

has lost some graceful elasticity of the spirit. You cannot clasp fingers with one of her thoughts and fly up on an idea and share opinions with her. She is pickling her opinions. You can frequently smell the vinegar of her mind boiling. At such moments I have become so enfeebled spiritually as to be momentarily deprived of my soul. I am of the earth earthy, due entirely, I suppose, to the effect her obvious worth has upon my stricken conscience.

But I am not alone in these sensations, only more vocative about them. I have observed her carefully; she is widely depressing.

I have known such a woman to go abroad, spend a year studying art in all the galleries of Europe, come home, deliver a lecture on the masterpieces she has seen and fatigue her audience to the brink of tears. One must be a person in order to entertain other persons, and she had lost that touch of Nature which makes us kin whether we are kind or not. She is a grammarian of duties, and a recitation of culture if she invades that field. Nothing illuminating sticks to her, nothing softening can happen to her mentally.

Some instinct for liberty warned me from the beginning to avoid the fate of these unfortunate best-of-all women. I have been very busy for forty years, but in my hardest circuit-rider days I never would do all of my own work; only so much of it as could not possibly be avoided. Even then I was careful not to put my whole mind on it. If I had to wash dishes, I always spat enough wit through the kitchen door at Lundy, even if he was in the utter-

most parts of the parsonage, to draw his fire and thus divorce my attention from the clatter in the dish pan. Whatever else happens to me, I will never do my own work. If it comes to that, I will escape the disaster to my soul by having no works. Dishes and laundry are not mentioned in the Scriptures, therefore they are not obligatory. I will let my faith praise me rather than my doughnuts.

In recording this scandalous moral limitation I am simply exposing to view the kind of mind I have, knowing well how many better women will take a shot at it. Let them bang away. I would rather have my reputation as a domestic animal riddled than to have my dearer faculties destroyed by a flatiron or dishwater. No one was ever more reduced in poverty than I have been, not one a more considerate or obedient wife. But I managed to remain a wife, never the mere servant of my husband. If you must do it, make the business brief and forgetful. Give him a balanced ration and leave every man to iron his own shirt, would be my motto, even if I went to the field with him afterwards and ploughed a furrow by way of reciprocity. The idea is to keep in with your husband at whatever cost. It works out better in the long run than making a pig of him at the table and a tyrant of him in the house.

The disposition to do that is a senseless weakness in devoted women. Added to their domestic pride, it accounts for the enormous labor now necessary in the conducting of a home and the entertainment of guests.

I am writing this record, however, to prove that the keeping of virtues and those attributes becoming to what you think is your nobler nature is an expensive business, and places you within grasping range of everybody doing business with you who has no such vainglorious sense of himself to serve.

I have never found that it pays in any worldly sense to be outrageously and unscrupulously upright in my dealings. The question is whether the inward foundations one lays that cannot be swept away by earthly misfortunes make up for the losses one sustains. I do not know. I sometimes suffer a very strong temptation to take an inferior's underhold upon a person who thinks I am an easy mark and pull off the deal according to his standards in business, not mine, just to learn how it feels to win that way. This, however, is a puerile temptation. My habits are established. I have no practice in shrewdness; only cunning enough not to experiment with my too-long-buried talent.

XXXI

YOU MAKE YOURSELF

THE forces that create us pass away, whether they are parents, teachers, or books, and we are left at last to re-create ourselves in the image of our own minds. This was what happened to me after the death of my husband. The woman I was and the mind I had then faded into a sort of peaceful silence. I was not for a long time. I remember feeling strangely like a ghost, surrounded by the same friends, in the midst of familiar scenes, but not of them, removed by death as far, maybe, as he was from the mind and life I had with him. He had been my altar and my church, I discovered.

From that day forth I escaped from the meekness of being merely a Methodist. I was Hagar going off into the wilderness with my own Bible, leaving behind me forever the Abraham and Rebecca brethren and sisters of the established order. I was in danger of raising up the very Ishmael of a mind against them. But this passed. By nature I am short on vindictiveness. I am not even respectable at this point. I have known myself to relax and forgive people whom I doubt if the Lord will ever forgive. They seem to pass out of my thoughts like shadows that obscure the light.

This happened later. Directly after Lundy's death I was a very dangerous person, quite mad

with the pain and horror of what had happened to him.

I have a vivid picture of myself at this time one day in my darkened house. I am sitting outrageously straight, pale and wan in my black dress, but not bowed down or weeping as a widow should be. And I am being visited by a great preacher in our church who has come to pray with me, to the end that I shall find the grace to forgive certain brethren who used my husband spitefully in his last days. But I refuse to kneel or to pray or forgive these men. Let God do it, I told him, since the Lord only knows how and when to pardon us. I left them terribly in His hands and sat with mine neatly folded, while this prince of the Church parted his coat tails and fairly shook the shadows of that sad place with his petition in my behalf. Then he arose, faced about, and stared at me.

'Their sins be upon their own heads,' I retorted, feeling very pale and weak, but tearless and determined.

I may have referred to this incident in another place, but I am copying it here to indicate that as soon as that I was stripping my mind of religious sentimentality and assuming a sensible relation to the Lord, who believes profoundly in punishing wickedness even if a good man commits it.

Shortly after this I had an assignment from the editor of 'The Saturday Evening Post' to go abroad and write a series of articles about the women of the Old World.

I was seriously ill at the time, depleted in mind

and body; but I accepted the commission, as a gambler takes a bet, without giving the editor the least intimation about my physical condition. You cannot be overscrupulous in dealing with editors without queering your own game. Very few of them will arrange with a sick man to do a long piece of work. My idea is to keep my word with them if I die for it, and to leave them to take all the other risks. Even at that I have been obliged to deny myself the vanity of making many contracts with them on account of knowing that I can write just so many words a day, and that there are only three hundred and sixty-five days in a year. Which is as much as I am capable of morally in my relations with them.

On my way home, after making this arrangement, it occurred to me that I would stop over at Dr. Howard Kelly's hospital in Baltimore and find out exactly how ill I was; not that this would make any difference in my plans to go abroad, but I wanted to get some idea of the odds in my own body against this achievement.

Doctor Kelly was positive that I was in no condition to go. I was a very sick person. If I persisted in this undertaking, he predicted that I would be brought home feet foremost, which in my opinion is a very dull way to arrive.

I sailed two weeks later, stirred around for six months among the women in the various countries of Europe and wrote my impressions of them. Those articles would read now as old daguerreotypes look of a far former generation. Some of the

great ones whom I met then are dead, like Frau Cower of Berlin. I doubt if she would be great now if she were living. Women have changed the definition of their greatness since then. She was a neat, dim little old woman with a piece of lace pinned like a rosette on top of her gray hair. She had a patient, enlightened, philosophical mind about the future of her country women. The emperor reviewed his troops that very day in September of 1911, but I do not suppose Frau Cower had the least inkling of the terrible future already dawning for German women. My idea of her is that if she had known she would have skipped the Great War by the length of a century and gone on with her calculations as if that had been an interruption in destiny. She had a long-distance mind.

Rosa Goldberg was the most notorious woman in Germany then, but not the most influential. If there was one with actual influence there at that time, it was Alice Soloman. I have often wondered what became of her. She had power and charm, a certain beautiful enthusiasm that made her effective with men. But Rosa was murdered. This was before the time when it was conceivable to deal so with even the worst of women in public life.

Emma Goldman, a far worse woman, was quite the fashion in this country then. She had her disciples among a certain class of our decadent intellectuals, to say nothing of the great following in her own class. I remember her well, slouchily dressed, with a scrubwoman's figure, black hair, straight and parted in the middle, black eyes, large

and strong, that missed focusing on other women's faces. Olive skin, flushed, thick, red lips, the lower one loose. She taught dishonor and deserved death, but worked like an evil worm at the foundation of our social order for twenty years before she was even banished. Which always seemed to me a futile sort of gesture, in view of the fact that immigrants are examined at Ellis Island for physical disorders and are rejected on account of having a pimple, but are permitted to enter with the most frightful diseases of the mind.

The point about this first adventure I made abroad is that I survived it and came home head foremost in the business of living as usual.

I have survived a number of physicians who predicted my death. It is not so difficult. You simply make up your mind not to die of your complaint, however fatal it sounds in the diagnosis, but to live according to your spirit as much as possible. I am not expecting to keep up the struggle indefinitely. This body is not so substantial as it used to be. The dear thing will drop off me some day like a worn-out garment. But I shall have got the last shred of wear and tear out of it. And I shall always remember in paradise what a brave chance I had in it to do and think and go about on my two feet, which in my present mortal state still seems a safer way of traveling than by wing.

I do not pretend to be a grasping, discriminating student of the Bible. I have chosen from it what I need, but I cannot even claim to have read it through consecutively. Many enlightening passages may

have escaped me, but I do not recall the portrait of a single saint with wings in the Scriptures. Elijah disappeared in a chariot of fire. Moses died like a disappointed man. When they reappeared in that cloud of witnesses, it was a cloud; nothing recorded of their wings. After Jesus was transfigured, He ascended into heaven. No need of wings.

I think it is probably the mortal imaginations of our preachers and artists have added this doctrine of wings to saints, because they felt obliged to illustrate by the familiar symbol of feathers the *modus vivendi* of immortality to mortal minds. On the contrary, the one authoritative description of how we rise from the dust discreetly records that our corruption puts on incorruption and this body shall be raised a spiritual body. Only angels, those earlier messengers sent to men, are recorded as having wings. I do not suppose these beings ever were in the flesh. I doubt if they are of the same stuff we shall be. It would not surprise me if they turned out to be the mere birds of heaven, and that the saints will be stepping around as usual, very light on their feet, maybe, but wingless.

I do not recommend this idea to others, but to me it is comforting. I have always felt the need of having something firm to rest upon, even when I tuck the head of my spirit beneath the wings of my imagination and pass into a heavenly reverie. I am psychologically opposed to being up in the mere air, here or hereafter.

The minds we have make slaves of us. We build a city or take one. We make laws, establish our insti-

tutions and our covetousness in commerce. We call this a civilization; but it is nothing, no more than the dream of a transient world that never stands the tests of the great realities which remain unshaken in us beyond all our knowledge and powers assumed. It is invariably destroyed, blown away before the wind of some change in our minds. And we lie at last buried deep in the dust of our endeavors. But nothing sleeps in the dust. It must rise and live again. So do we come up from the dark wilderness of these disorders and start all over again after the pattern of our own minds. Another dream, in which men walk like somnambulists for centuries to the same doom of death and dust regardless of God, even when we call it a Christian civilization, missing the way, the truth, and the life as we did before.

The importance we attach to the workings of the merely mortal mind seems to me to approach madness. If for one moment we could escape from the illusion created by our own faculties, we should perceive that we make of ourselves the fools of all creation. The sense to live is the only wit that really counts, and we have less of that than any other creature. We have only the sense to overcome, achieve, and to destroy. A flea knows where to hop, but we do not know. A dog knows the way home, but the smarter a man is the more likely he is to lose his way home. He can only think, believe, hope; but he does not know the simplest things that the beasts of the field never have to learn. He will drink from a pool that a thirsty ass will pass by because the ass knows the water is polluted.

The very earth has more sense than we ever show. It is not inanimate, but contains and uses all the elements we call brains without having them incased as ours are in a small bone shell. The life that springs green and silent from its breast is more obedient to law than we are, and survives us. It knows a joy and peace in living that we never learn. We are foolish to think the trees are not wise because they do not speak.

I have long suspected that the power of speech is not a power at all, but a mere form of hysteria from which the living that really know the truth never suffer because they do not fear life or death as we do and can afford to be calm and silent. The frailest flower that blooms knows that it will rise from the dead in the next season's sun, breathe, feel again the dew and rain. Therefore these little ones make no such tragedy as we do of death. Their knowledge is better than our faith in immortality. We make a religion and an anguish of doubts about an incident which all Nature, every Scripture, and our own instincts prove is a senseless anxiety. We do live again in the spirit if the very dust rises again in myriad forms of beauty and strength.

But no scientist would offer such evidence. He must think it out, when this is something which cannot be thought, but must be accepted as we take our breath from the air without arguing about it. And the very theologians will throw up their hands in pious horror at such an idea, give it a bad name like pantheism, as if this was the name of a peculiarly damnable heresy.

My notion is that it is not our heresies but our sins that damn us, and no Christian name we apply to them will save us. I am no pantheist; I am one of those humbler, more transient manifestations of the will of God. The grass outlives me, the rose outblossoms in blossoms that praise Him better than mortal deeds, and I know the stars outshine me, no matter how immortal I am. As a spirit clothed in celestial light, I doubt if I should amount to more than one short beam in a universe filled with the brilliance of His glory.

To me, it appears sillily egotistical to give ourselves such airs about being immortal. Everything else is. The very stones are fertile and furnish elements indispensable to life. We, indeed, are the only created forms of life that entertain trembling, despairing doubts about that. We are even stupid and narrow-minded when our lid comes off and we go insane. We stick to the beaten tracks of the mortal mind, no real imagination in our delusions. The asylums are filled with men and women who believe themselves to be kings and queens or some other great mortals. I have never heard of one who imagined himself a disembodied spirit. The nearest they ever come to that is by claiming to be disastrous prophets. I have never heard of one who had the glory of madness to believe himself a majestic oak or even a blade of grass. The nearest approach I recall was the poor young lunatic who thought he was a grain of corn and invariably took to his heels at the sight of a chicken. We show too many evidences of ignominy to give ourselves airs, sane or insane.

If I should take leave of my senses while I am still in the flesh — for I do not expect to need such senses when I am finally in the spirit, any more than flowers take thought to bloom — I hope I shall swing out into a more becoming conceit than the notion that I am an article of diet suitable for a hen, or even the Queen of Sheba. I have my doubts about whether she was all she should have been, or she could not have been traipsing after a man with Solomon's notorious reputation. My vanity would be better served with the delusion of being an ever-blooming rose. As it is, I suffer sometimes from the vague regret that I missed blooming at the right time, the weather of my years being inclement then and unsuited to mere happiness.

But this record will prove that I had my delusions along with the rest of my kind, and that though time and experience destroy the dearest illusions, we do cling to the last to whatever delusion we adopt. It is a bondage of the mind which we work up and strengthen year by year until nothing remains but a terrible obedience.

What amazes me now is the shrewdness with which I avoided various forms of bondage by which women are so frequently defeated in their pursuit of happiness.

XXXII

THE LADY POLITICIAN

WITHOUT taking thought I have avoided the conscience of the modern woman, which is a very sensitive, diligent, and unhappy conscience. I seem to have lost step with my sex. No one honors more than I do the sincerity of their purpose to reform, improve, and save the world. But I mistrust their judgment. I particularly mistrust their power to achieve their own wills. We have always been dominated in mind and conduct by men. We have never been free moral agents, nor even immoral ones. Cast your eye about and you will always see the string some man pulls to move the puppet we are.

However it may appear to others I do not know, but to me women seem to be more completely under the dominion of men than ever before. The difference is that formerly we were managed or mismanaged by our husbands and fathers; now it takes a whole political party to turn us about and use us for their honor and glory; but they do it. If any one calls attention to the amendments and laws we have been instrumental in getting on the statute books, I call your attention to the fact that the state of the individual woman is not changed. The wife signs away her property as usual if the husband needs it. The mothers have less influence than ever before upon the character and conduct of their sons. The

only political influence they have is by adding themselves obediently in subordinate positions to the great political parties. Never were there so many handmaidens to politicians in this world. It is a less elevating service than being a down-trodden 'widow indeed' who was required to wash the feet of saints — presumably male saints. They are now atoms of public life, but men control public opinion. So watch the atoms spin.

The trouble is we can pass no amendment to the Constitution that will change our own nature.

How well I understand the predicament of that young woman delegate to the Democratic convention recently held in New York!

No one will deny the frequent assertion made through the press that the women delegates in this convention were an admirable body of women, but those who are most familiar with the attributes of what men call admirable women will have their very grave doubts about whether they had any more to do than they were told with the final choice and nomination of John W. Davis as our presidential candidate, which was the very creditable performance of what appeared at one time to be a convention decidedly discreditable to the great party it represented.

If the women in it had been equal to the emergency, they might at least have insisted upon a physical examination of the contending candidates. This would have eliminated some of the contestants quietly and decently, as we bury the dead, without so much scandal and with less than half the expense

incurred in getting rid of them. Right now we do not know whether the livers and kidneys of Coolidge and Davis are sound. But when we consider the casualties in the White House due to electing men depleted in health and vitality, this is as important an issue before a nominating convention as any plank in their respective platforms. More than half these give way anyhow later on under pressure. But when the man himself is sickly the chances are ten to one he will not survive the intolerable burdens he has assumed, and this is always a national tragedy.

The ineffective person is always the shrewdest critic of those who strive, however blindly, to achieve. I seem to belong to that class, but I am so located for the sake of discretion, not for purpose of criticism. I do a bit of haphazard voting now and then for the purifying of my purely conventional conscience, much as one recites a prayer without believing the Lord hears his petition. I know the cards have been stacked and the successful candidate for that office has been predestined. So I never fash myself into a state of enthusiasm or animosity over an election.

The most significant evidence I have of the political importance of women is the change in the character of my own mail. Formerly it consisted entirely of letters from admiring readers or indignant readers of my books, or from those kind private folk who are one's dearest friends, even if one never beholds their faces. They write by way of clasping hands with you or exchanging confidences with you. But now if a political campaign opens, I suppose

every woman receives as many letters as if she had written a particularly appealing book. Every candidate from the coroner type to the more iridescent eloquent type who wants to be a congressman or senator writes to solicit our votes.

These are remarkably dull letters, couched in the embarrassed language of an awkward man writing to a respectable woman, whom he really does not like, inviting her to vote for him. To me it seems a frightful waste of postage, especially when the thing bears a picture of the aspiring author. Yesterday I had such a letter, ornamented with the printed likeness of one who is running for the office of health commissioner in this State, a man so grossly fat that he has practically no lines in his face by which a thought might be expressed. My idea of a health commissioner would be a lean man with a vital athletic expression.

But my political psychology may be wrong. It is possible that an obese commissioner might be moved to preach a healthful gospel of abstinence and a balanced ration. My impression is that they are all glittering generalities so far as the health of the people is concerned, and that the lady demonstrators who travel like missionaries through all the counties teaching girls to can and cook hold the health of the next generation in their frail but diligent hands. Nobody elects them. They get appointed by hook or crook and do valiant service.

In short, I have reached the eye-opening age when a personal letter from the noblest statesman of them could not move me to any real interest in his fate.

Why should one vote? At the present moment the highest official in this state is candidate for reëlection without opposition. Personally, he bears a faintly pathetic resemblance to Lord Byron. And quite the contrary is true of him. He is not a poet. He is totally lacking in that quality which inspired Byron, banished, to lead an insurrection in a foreign country against despotism. And we cannot banish him! I have understood that he is an eminently respectable family man, which really contributes little to his eminence as a public servant. He can lead a prayer meeting accompanied by the amen chorus of the best brethren, but he cannot lead a people.

The instinct for personal liberty mentioned a while ago has also led me to avoid participating in the activities so popular and so ably conducted by the various women's organizations. Place yourself within reach of the executive committee of any up-and-doing group of women, and find out how much time or strength you have left to spend upon your own affairs! If you are a social climber, they will give you prominence in exchange for as much faithful service as you are capable of rendering. If you desire recognition, which is the complimentary name of publicity, you may have it as a reward for devoting yourself to some department of public service for the benefit of mankind, or for children, or for charity.

If by some fluke of circumstance you have earned distinction, they can use you for the good of half a dozen causes so completely that you will never have

another half hour to devote to your own cause. Henceforth you will be identified with their achievements. You will not have one laurel left on your brow which does not belong to womanhood at large. If you belong to that ever-increasing volume of women who crave self-expression, they can provide more ways for you to express yourself than if you were a mere Christian wife and the mother of ten children. They are using up more wasted feminine energy than any other power company known to civilization.

XXXIII

LIVING IN A BOOK

IF you have lived in one house all your life, it becomes so familiar to you that you do not think of its corners and angles, how the light comes and the shadows fall through the windows. You do not remember its upper chamber, because you are living in that chamber, nor that quiet inner room where you sometimes go to pray, because you are still going in there, closing the door and falling upon your knees when times are hard in your spirit, and asking for a little comfort. But some day when the door is shut and you are left outside, carried away by some wind of destiny, bereaved of these intimate associations with it, then you remember all the inside of that house, every board in the walls, where you slept and where you worked, the place you used to sit with folded hands when the day's work was done.

So it has been with me about the Bible. As long as Lundy lived we were in it. It seems to me I was always traveling its pages back and forth from the old dispensation to the new dispensation, from one Gospel to another Gospel, wandering around in Revelation as one walks upon the shores of a strange land, mystified.

In those days it never occurred to me to quote the Scriptures. I left Lundy to do that. I was not even

aware of being word-perfect in them. But after his death they came back to me, and I had the use of them as if they belonged to me at last according to my own mind. I recall them by my association with him. I use them right and left as he never would have dared to use them. The little kind ones are like bright footpaths that lead now more particularly to my own God, which I used to travel with him in the shadows. The great ones stretch away before and after me beyond the limits of time and sense. I do not try to reduce them to the dimensions of my own thoughts; I simply spread myself in them and feel immortality eased in all this space.

When you have only one book you use it a great deal. I have read many books, but I never had my own personal rights to but one, the Bible. The others belong to the authors who wrote them. They have been created, but, broadly speaking, they are not creative. The Bible is. I may be pardoned then for referring to it frequently as the source from which I have received most of my inspiration in living and thinking.

Now it is a mistake to fit your life to one or two Scriptures when there is such a wide choice of them. So when these moods of godly depression fall upon me and I am feeling like a poor old How-Firm-a-Foundation, or like a spiritual leaf that has been used a long time for the fattening or healing of the ungodly, I stir about in the Gospels for a better prophecy of myself. Something like this, for example: 'And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his

season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'

Nothing is changed, you understand; the same law of the spiritual world is demanding the laying down of my life for His sake; but I get an extension of that law for my own mortal sake. Somewhere, sometime I shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, and whatsoever I do shall prosper! I am not above making a literal interpretation of such a promise in the fairing weather of my mind. I begin to feel greener, fresher in my boughs. Suddenly I am conscious of many rivers of kind water that have flowed close to the roots of my life. I have sinned quite a good deal and come short of my own glories, much less the Lord's glory. Still I have not lost much, only a few of my dearer treasures laid up where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt. I am very well off here. After all, for a bush of my size I have brought forth considerable fruit. I am not old; I feel everlasting. Therefore let the years come; time cannot defeat or harm me.

In such a mood I can swing paragraphs by the hour from the tip of my pen, or I can go forth and plant a field, strutting in the conviction that whatsoever I do shall prosper. It is a grand feeling, kin to that liberty the old-fashioned preachers used to claim when they made sure the Holy Ghost had descended upon them and they fell upon their congregations with power.

It all comes to this again and again when you get the chance to see through your glass clearly for a moment: The Scriptures were made for us. They are

the literature of what we are, the great reference book of man. We are not created like victims to fulfill them. By living we do fulfill them, no matter how we live, in the flesh or in the spirit, or, like the mortal hyphens we really are, halfway between. I use my Scriptures this way, regardless of what may happen to the favorite creeds and doctrines of other people. The idea of a church God or a national God is too diffused to meet my personal needs and peculiarities.

I believe this is true of every man.

I cannot tell now how I missed even the faintest association with the Scriptures in the minds of the people who knew me best. Maybe it was because I was never prominent in church work; maybe it was because after the shadows fell upon me and I had premonitions of Lundy's fate I did not ask the prayers of all Christian people, nor take even one saint into my confidence lest he should suffer by this betrayal. In any case, after he was gone, and I stepped forth in my own written word caparisoned in so many of his favorite passages from the Bible, some of these people were scandalized as if a light and humorous person masqueraded in sacred garments. My own church regarded me askance for a long time. I was never offended. On the contrary, I comprehended their anxiety with a sort of sympathy.

Comparatively few people inherit the Scriptures; they get them as we Protestants accuse the Catholics of getting theirs — predigested, interpreted, laid down for them in creeds and doctrines. My poor

brethren could not be sure that I would not presently rise up in the insolence of my own mortal mind and deny the divinity of Jesus Christ or commit some other damnable heresy. This is frequently the way with those who interpret the word for themselves. They want to square it with some half-developed science which will be changed or refuted to-morrow, or they go off on a purely intellectual tangent. As a spiritually endowed person I have always had the sense to look down upon our finite reasoning powers and to despise my intellectual tangents.

I have discovered, however, that in dealing with Christians of whatever denomination it is discreet and valorous to use my mortal wits as shrewdly as if I dealt with the impious. They may not be subject to the same vices, but they have a record as long as the history of man for persecution. That is still an active principle of the religious conscience. I had my doubts about whether a mere woman would be considered eligible to a church trial for heresy, not having heard of one in my times who had suffered this distinction. Still, it was just as well to settle down somewhere beyond the reach of this honor. So, long since, I have allowed my membership to lapse. Not even a presiding elder can summon me before a quarterly conference to be tried either for my sins or my views concerning this or that doctrine. I am a Methodist unconfined, outside in the Lord's pasture at large. If my church puts on a million-dollar drive for funds, I dutifully give my widow's mite and spend my real Christian charity on a family of Hardshell Baptists who are in

graver need of help than a rich and prosperous church.

When the Southern Methodist Church unites with the Northern branch of this same denomination, as now seems imminent, I contemplate reducing the widow's mite of my contribution. As the devoted bystander of the Southern Methodist Church, I am opposed to this Union; not on account of prejudices connected with the reconstruction period, when we escaped their maudlin sentimentality concerning the negroes by withdrawing from them. I merely remember that as a warning, but my real objection is that we can be better brethren in Christ further apart.

XXXIV

HAPPINESS

THE trouble is that we can use the Scriptures only as far as they will go, and those we have do not seem to be complete. I have a vague hungry feeling that we have not discovered all of them. There must be a few tablets still buried somewhere thousands of years deep in brighter dust which record a little happiness, something to ease the strain of so many sacrifices and holy joys. I have had such joys. It is like coming up through great tribulations and sitting for a moment beneath your halo with tears on your cheeks. I am not complaining, you understand; it is a grand feeling, but too poignant to be really restful, as if you had been exalted by a deed or a sacrifice and must choose just holiness when you are still in the flesh and feel the mortal need of relaxing some.

I know by the witness of my own spirit that we have missed a Gospel or two which contained the strictly human touch in words. Paul comes somewhere near it in his tender letters to Timothy, but all these apostles were made too grave by their suffering to catch the light of that message we should have. The place where it really belongs is in those passages quoted from Jesus. I am certain they failed to record all he said, or that it has been lost, or that it is still hidden away in the archives of time. He was fearless, merciful, so good at remembering that we are dust, he would have made a little allowance

for that kind of happiness humans need; not an indulgence in sin, but an indulgence in life.

I do hope it is not blasphemous to say that I can almost see Jesus in such a mood; His people at ease about Him. It would be a quiet, bright morning before the multitudes began to gather. And He will have looked at these chosen to keep and defend the Word with that blessing look even we can bestow upon children whom we love. And He will have said, 'Little children, be happy!' Something like that He must have said, knowing what travails they were to pass through and how greatly they would need the respite of light-heartedness. But nothing of the kind is recorded anywhere in the Bible.

The word 'happy' does occur at rare intervals, but it is too fearfully qualified. 'Happy is the man that feareth alway,' says Solomon. And Job in great pain catches his breath with this: 'Happy is the man whom God correcteth.' And James says, 'We count them happy which endure.' All of which means, fortunate are they who are prepared for the worst, take their punishments with meekness, and endure with courage. These are the evidences of a good character and a noble mind, but not my idea of real happiness. One wearies of worrying all the time with his best attributes, especially in plain sight of the wicked, who do seem to flourish without any such attributes. I have never taken this as hard as Jeremiah did; still, I have had my feelings.

One day Jeremiah's virtues irked him. He was too aloof and lonesome. And he had what you may call an altercation with the Lord:

‘Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.’

He goes on reminding the Lord of his own obedience and how he has borne his trials until his sense of outraged justice gets the better of him, and he exclaims, ‘Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.’

I do not suppose the very treacherous are happy and I have never wanted the wicked pulled out like sheep for the slaughter, but I have always wanted to ask a truly bad man who seemed to be having a good time if he really was enjoying himself.

I have always had a hankering after some cheerful salvation, suitable and sanctifying to me as a human being in this present world, where I know what I am doing and what I want. I feel that I have a buried talent for just happiness, a sort of incandescence of my own nature which longs to shine. It seems to me that I have never made my happy sounds in living. I have missed that laughter which is the speech of a merry heart. But I have heard it many a time in a crowd and always flitted my head around to see who made it. Usually a young person whose burdens are still being borne by others.

But once, I remember, it was an old woman standing in her own dooryard watching two children,

serious and absorbed in their play. Such a figure! Tall and gaunt, so straight and finely posed, her homely dress might have been a rag flung over an imperishable ideal. Such a face! Wrinkled, brown, rough, like a crude verse written by somebody like Ossian; the wind and the weather of life had passed over it, but now the sun in her eyes, the simplicity of the deepest wisdom made humorous upon her smiling lips. No comeliness anywhere, but that beauty of honest happiness in every line. I think of her as a song I saw once in the flesh set to a good stout tune of laughter.

I have a distinct recollection of such people through the whole of my life. They do exist — women who have survived all their fears and learned their burdens by heart and stand canonized by that undefeated look of happiness. I have seen someone go by who looked like a joyful traveler on his way to some happiness he had earned, carrying himself, you may say, with the long light stride of a good conscience. At such times I have felt the light of my wings as if I had seen the witness of my own hopes go by.

These are the only people I have ever envied. They have an expression of animation not intellectual, but vital, so different from that conquered look of peace which I am always fearing will settle upon my face before I know what they have learned, not by thinking, but by some happier use they have made of living.

I cannot now recall when this idea first took possession of me, but it was far back in the years —

that the life I was living was not mine, but a sentence imposed upon me by fate, to be served faithfully. And then as a reward further on I should have my very own life, which would be different. I was not so concerned as my husband to win heaven. I had an impression then which has persisted with me to this day, that for all we know this life may be a rest the Lord gives us between long spells of eternity. I anticipated some place in my years where happiness would begin, as tired people look forward to a vacation.

Shortly after 'A Circuit Rider's Wife' was published, it seemed to me I saw it, as you look a long way down the road and see a wider brighter place where you turn in through a gate and enter your own house. I remember saying something to Lundy about this. We would get away presently from all the cares we had ever had, take a little house in the country and begin to live happy ever after. I remember his silence, the look he gave me. If in the last day when we are called there is one who hears, but cannot rise from his dust, he will have just that look of terrible comprehension.

It comforts me now to remember that not even in this dark time when the shades were deepening about him did I ever raise my hands to heaven and cry, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' I think well of myself that my one concern was to keep him and comfort him as long as I could reach him. Maybe I shall never achieve happiness, but one thing I have had — the terrible wisdom of love. I cannot doubt that I have received the best

of my life and nearly every gift that prospered in me from my association with Lundy. What really troubles me sometimes is whether or not he might have fared better in the spirit if he had been free as a monk to seek his sacrifices and renunciations.

I think now happiness is a thing you practice like music until you have skill in striking the right notes on time. We have no vocation for it. And I had no practice, not a day when I was free from care and one great anxiety — and one must be free to be happy. I know that much about it by having missed it.

I came nearer to what happiness must be, a sort of deliverance from the things that are, after I began to do creative work. Once I had a pen in my hand and the use of my faculties, the casements of all my darkness were flung wide and I escaped into a very bright, quiet, good world of thoughts. Every memory from my earliest childhood came back to me, luminous substances to be worked into words. It was like weaving love and deeds and the beautiful colors of every sensation upon the loom of my mind. What I accomplished was as nothing to the visions I had. If, as Matthew Arnold claimed, genius consists in the power to recall, I may lay some claim to having genius. In one small room all my lights and darkness came; people that I had seen, but never knew, were suddenly revealed to me, so that I could write down the very secrets of their hearts. Men and women, long since dead, lived again and waited there close as life to be used in case I needed them for a paragraph or two. Things that Lundy had said,

poetry and philosophy that he had read to me, piled up like notes on my desk, changed, you understand, by the alchemy of my own mind, but still the parents of my thoughts. When I think of the vast stores of material I have had, the wonder and grief to me is that I have made such a dim and poor use of them.

Once you get away from the Word, any discussion of religion is unprofitable and apt to become acrimonious. For this last page or two I have felt my own spiritual gorge rising, a mean and distasteful sensation which has no place in this record. It is better to go back to my original speculations on happiness.

This is not a thing to tell, for it concerns the more intimate annals of my mind and is set down here with the same apology one should make for shouting in public when in an exalted spiritual mood. But here it is. Many a time when I have filched a grand thought or some finer truth out of life to write down, I am too moved to do it. I get up and pace the floor. I cast a thankful look through the ceiling at my heavenly Father, or I rush bareheaded out of doors in the bleakest weather to cool off this happiness, so that presently I may return and copy it into words.

If this is happiness, I have had it; but my suspicion is that I may have experienced then only the pangs of a great joy. It is not a thing achieved by inspiration, even if you write an epic or paint a noble picture. You have produced something. My idea of happiness is something you get. It is intaking, not creative. You cannot think it. It comes to you in the reality of personal experience, selfish and satis-

fyng. What I want to know is how I have missed it. Is it by some infernally digestive attitude of my mind toward common human experience which consumes my illusions, or is it on account of circumstances over which I have no control, or have I just led myself like a wanderer walking in a blind circle between two worlds?

XXXV

THE LATTER DAYS

I HAVE often wondered what becomes of us here in this life. For what we were in the beginning does pass away, and we become the millstone around our own neck. No matter how good we try to be or how bad we actually are, we barely keep up appearances. It is not time that changes us, but our own desires, ambitions and the fierce struggle we make to get what we want. The body breaks under the strain, our faculties begin to wobble like shooting stars, even if they leave a trail of light behind them. We lose our grip, let go and stand aside, but not satisfied. No matter how wise we have been, we grow simple. No matter how rich, we become mendicants searching the faces of youth for a little praise or recognition, ready to accept any flattery, however obvious, disposed to keep our noses and let out that long plaint of weariness and disillusionment peculiar to our condition.

Many years ago there was a distinguished Methodist preacher in Tennessee. He rose so high in the ranks of his brethren that we called him a divine, and he had some kind of double-D title conferred upon him. He was a good man and did valiant service for his Lord and for the Church. At last his strength began to fail. Some power of the Presence went out of him as it always does when the magnetism of personality dies down in a preacher. His

sermons lengthened intolerably, which is the final symptom a minister in our Church shows before the bishop and presiding elders superannuate him. No congregation wants the Word drooled to it even by a saint. So this old man was retired on his niggardly little pension and went to live with his married daughter.

One day I met him on the street, pushing a baby carriage with his youngest grandchild in it. He wore his pastoral clothes, stiff collar, and white bow tie. His linen was as white as the apron of a neat nursemaid. But what a look in his eye, an expression of tears! Isaiah demoted! Nothing humanly unkind had happened to him. His daughter had probably taken this method of airing the baby and getting her father to take exercise at the same time. But when you have preached salvation with power from the pulpit for fifty years, it is worse than a fall from grace to be reduced to pushing a baby carriage.

I halted to wish him good-morning and to admire the baby. He did not care much for this morning, and let the baby go for a moment; he wished to say something to me.

'If you knew what old age really is, you would pray for death while you are young!' he quavered.

I tried to comfort him, but he was too terribly wise to be comforted.

'You know,' he went on, 'I am not supposed to be of sound mind. So they give me little tasks like this to keep me occupied,' regarding the infant ruefully.

‘When you have been ordained and preached the gospel for many years, and moved men by the spirit, it’s a terrible experience to be set aside as of no further consequence. I may act a little queer; you do when misfortune and defeat overtake you in your old age. But if I behaved as senselessly as a lot of young men do, I’d be hailed before a lunacy commission!’

And this was twenty years ago, when nobody thought of summoning an alienist to determine the mental responsibility of a youth who had run amuck and committed a crime.

As I grow older and feel the changes that wisdom and experience make in me, and learn to sit down more to husband my failing strength and to keep silent longer when younger people are exploiting the foolishness of their wits, I often think of that old man toddling feebly behind the baby carriage, shorn of all his earthly glories save the insignia of his long pastoral coat tails, despised because his mind had passed the spring and summer seasons of animal wit and aggressiveness, but pathetically wise.

I am determined to avoid his fate by taking thought now while my will is strong, and I have fairly good business sense, and still reign supreme in my own estimation to be spoofed or cajoled by the flattery of being merely humored. I am already old enough to fix a measuring eye upon any younger person who undertakes to pacify me with the mere assurance that such-and-such a thing is all right; nothing is going to break; everything is greased and the clutch is working properly. I have known my-

self to get out of the car and find something wrong and ready to break, and much of it not greased, and the clutch needing to be relined.

This sort of enterprise does not enhance your reputation for sweetness and light among young people, but we must simply keep up our courage and stand the gaff. If you are a woman, and have passed the age of control by your merely feminine charms, the only thing left is to exercise sufficient authority to put the fear of God in these youngsters and sit tight. My grandfather was not so far wrong when he was dying and ordered us who were about to supersede him in living out of the room! That was the last act of authority performed by a gallant gentleman who showed a proper contempt for sniveling youth.

I do not know how it happens, but as we grow older our friends and relatives become miraculously younger. We seem to survive too many of those companions with whom we started in life and passed our achieving years. As our infirmities increase, they wax stronger, and we become no more than a memory sitting in the chimney corner. However generous and considerate they are of your feeling and comfort, you have lost your standing among them. The consequences are inevitable. You cannot hold your hand with them. With the best intentions, they are ready to take up your burdens and manage your affairs, which is really a tender way of taking your life away from you and leaving you in your old age without the means of supporting your own vanities and self-respect.

Never again can you show how much better judgment you have than they have in matters of management and economy! You may be permitted to hold your dear old yellow deeds, though frequently in a weary moment you also surrender them; but they have come into real possession of your property and they are inclined to use it recklessly, according to this speeding, spending new world they are making for themselves, while you become the helpless pensioner upon your own hard-earned bounties.

Nothing like that shall happen to me. I have observed young people very carefully. They are really the pensioners upon our wisdom and reared upon our earnings. If every man and woman past sixty should suddenly die, there would be one grand wake of a funeral, then this world would rock upon its foundations and go to pieces. I give youth thirty days to destroy the whole thing. What I mean is that we are very important the older we grow, and for conscience' sake should endeavor to live as long as possible in full possession of our powers and affairs.

I have sometimes considered passing my last days writing a book of gospels for the aged, designed to stimulate their courage and sense of self-importance. I have observed that we begin to lose them when we lose the purely physical attributes of strength and animation. This is that period when the mind clears and can be used most effectively according wisdom and experience, instead of those emotions which inevitably affect our actions and judgments during our younger years.

The time comes when these friends and these relatives who have grown up long after we grew up will gather around you out of respect, affection, and politeness; but you are a short circuit. There will be such a divergence in your point of view from their points of view that no common ground of conversation or comradeship remains. They will be sitting up with you off and on in this manner as if you were the dear dead body of an ancestor, although you may be getting your breath as usual and looking straight through those innocent young things, too polite to read aloud what you see going on inside of them.

The thing to do then is not to retire to your own room like a sundown old cat, or like a pathetically forgiving old woman, but to exile them. Send them back to sink or swim in the world they have made for themselves, and keep yours. Live and die under your own roof, even if you do it alone. I have a suspicion that it is a lonely passage, even if everybody is present.

I willed the world to these young powers and princes ten years ago when I came to this valley. They can have it. I am willing any time to spare them a few words of advice about how to conduct it, and I like to step around in it once in so often to see how things are going. But I reserve this small one, laid off like a garden between these hills and fitted to me as a fine old tune is fitted to the simple words of a good old hymn.

Once you begin to fumble according to your own light with a denominational idea of God or to mix

politics with your religion, your light goes out and you find yourself being tried for heresy or in some brotherhood which denies the divinity of Jesus, whereas if you had your own right mind toward the Lord you would know that any brotherhood which denies Jesus is apt to be a vindictive corporation organized against all men who do not belong to that union. We are not brothers except according to the way and the life of the great Galilean. I myself cannot pretend to be more than the disgusted step-brother of all modernists in the Church and of red radicals in general.

But after all we spend most of our centuries maneuvering in the right direction. It is only now and then that a demoniacal cat-fit starts somewhere, as in Russia at the present time. The hysteria spreads as demoniacal dancing did in the middle centuries, but it dies down. The whole thing comes from some monstrous mob ignorance of the spirit. The individual Russian still believes in his God, but the evil forces of stronger minds are exploiting him.

The thing that grieves is the casualties among the innocent along the way.

Here is a poor old bishop who has written a book in which he denies a personal deity and doubts there ever existed such a historical character as Jesus Christ. On the cover of his book is the emblem of Soviet Russia, the hammer and the sickle. Beneath that is the red star, emblem of the workers' party in America, and the first sentence of the book is a quotation from Karl Marx, 'Religion is the opium of the people.' I am touched by that old man's pre-

dicament as I am sometimes at the sight of an old Confederate soldier who had a brave record, but who has lost his wits and goes about decorated with cheap pewter and brass medals; only this poor soul has got them published on the cover of his book instead of being pinned upon his breast.

I have noticed a certain thing especially about brilliant men. They retain the use of their faculties long after they lose their judgment. If one of them remains in business too long after the prime of life, he is apt to slip up and make an investment which costs him the whole of a hard-earned fortune. If he is a thinker and an authority upon some obtuse subject, he is apt to lose his grip, take a header and show up among the spiritists, as in the case of Sir Oliver Lodge, who appears to have retained his thinking powers long after he lost the sense to use them.

It would not surprise me if H. G. Wells turned out to be a religious fanatic in his last days. These people suffer some kind of reverse in mind. They go off on tangents. So this innocent old bishop with the ascetic countenance and a noble Christian life behind him lost the rudder of his faculties, and is now being exploited by those arch madmen, the communists. He has apparently reached the mimetic stage of senility, got his metaphors mixed, and is trying to impersonate both the grand old bishop and the grand old communist so magnificently interpreted in the first chapters of 'Les Miserables.'

Old men are sometimes subject to great vanities of the soul without any wisdom. How else does one of them get the idea of calling himself the Episcopus

Bolsheviscum et Infidelium? Instead of being tried for heresy, he should be rescued, put away in a quiet, comfortable place and allowed to fan himself out according to his illusions. He is obviously a good old man who has been tricked and flattered by designing men and their still more designing propaganda. Somebody has reversed the lever of his mind, else his training in spiritual consciousness would have insured him against being upset by discovering traces of our Scriptures in mythology and every heathen religion and philosophy. These pagans, the very barbarians and savages, naturally borrow, plagiarize and take the truth as we do, frequently veiled in tradition. We all have the same God and must feel the stirrings of His image in us. If this man had been in his right senses, does any one believe that the study of astronomy could have possibly upset his strictly Christian faith? Can what we know or suspect about a purely physical universe affect the everlasting fact that our spirit does bear witness to the truth of such Scriptures as the Ten Commandments, the twenty-third Psalm and the Sermon on the Mount?

Words are dangerous things. They lead to heresy trials now, and they formerly led many martyrs to the stake. I suppose the good Bishop still believes in Providence, but here he is in his old age trying to liquidate his God into natural law. Somebody has stolen that many pages of his mind or he would know there never was a law without a lawmaker.

‘Banish gods from the skies and capitalists from the earth!’ he cries.

Well, that has been done in Russia. Religion certainly is the opium of the people there. Never has the world seen such a politically pious people. They sleep, indeed, but what uneasy slumber is this that filches all a man has and degrades him by his very sacrifices! Imagine living under a government which permits its people to prosper for a few years, in order that it may step in and confiscate their wealth and thus reduce them once more to the direst poverty of a national ideal where the only capitalist is this rogue of a government and the only god is the pickled body of an arch-fiend who even in death imposed his monstrous will upon them.

My feeling is that every man is entitled to his own God, which is the same God no man can escape. And heaven deliver me from living in a country where there are no capitalists! My idea would be to live in one where everybody would be in neighborly reach of one. But at that I am this close kin to the bishop in the perversity of my mind; I should like to see all communists and radicals banished from this country before they pollute the minds of the ignorant, irresponsible, and unwary, who are the real poor we have always with us, even if some of them are learned and rich.

My tides are falling. I have no longer the mortal power to believe everything and hope everything. I must leave hopes now for those who need them more than I do.

When you are passing into the afternoon of your years it is wise to break the habit you used to have of planning for the future, because your future is be-

hind you, as some Smart Aleck has said. It is sensible to economize in hopes, because they are depleting when you no longer have the power to achieve them. I have planted all my trees years ago. Presently I shall be obliged to sit beneath their shade and fold my hands. Even then I know I shall not be contented with just peace. I shall be looking and wishing for a little happiness.

When you are about to matriculate into old age you speculate a good deal about how you will feel then. I am thinking it would be a grand thing to live long enough to grow simple and full of faith and the artless happiness I had as a child. Old people do sometimes; they come again into that eager, snooping curiosity the very young have. They go about wondering and getting themselves happily deceived as we keep terrors and anxieties from little children. It is a sweet and blessed state.

Heaven preserve me from becoming a grand old woman and being obliged to keep my dignity and mind sitting up overwhelming others to the last! I should hate to pass out as one of my grandfathers did. He was very old, but he retained to the end an outrageously overbearing use of his faculties. All of us who were his meeker posterity had gathered respectfully about his bedside, not tearful, because he was intolerant of tears and we dared not weep. Presently he swept the whole bowed company with one glittering gray glance and commanded us to leave him alone.

'I will not be stared out of countenance at the very last!' he gasped.

So he died with all of us hidden behind the bed peeping at him.

I want some one to hold my hand then, and to hear many kind voices soothing me and praising me as if I had been a dear good old child for a long time. I want to be reduced to that innocency of the 'such as' when I go hence, and maybe trailing some fragment of the same cloud of glory with which I came from God who was my home.

XXXVI

WHY WORSHIP EUROPE?

WE never can be sure what it was that gave us a bad cold, and for some reason we invariably speculate about that as if it made a difference. So it is with getting to be an old person when we have always felt young. I suppose we do grow old, but we do not know it until suddenly the fact comes upon us. The curtain drops behind us, all those years when we were young pass into memory, and we see the whole of life from a soberer, wiser, different point of view. Our very self-consciousness gets a stoop in the shoulders, and though we may go on for a time with a square-shouldered air we are not the same.

About this time that change took place in me. I shall never know whether it was the death of my husband, ill-health, or that six months spent in Europe, but some vivacity of the spirit was gone when I came home. Life had been bent somewhere within. I felt the weariness of wisdom, such as one gets from the world. And I never had it until this time — a curious depression about the mortal fate of man. I was so outrageously tamed that I lost the habit of making dogmatic statements, which had always been a refreshing insolence of the mind with me, as bearing arms must be with a soldier of fortune. It seemed to me that I had been demoted and suddenly civilized.

Whatever may have been the cause I do not

know, but in my opinion it was Europe, that aged me. It is an old book of history, illustrated with the scenes and architecture of former, younger, more spirited races of men. The countries I saw could never have been produced by the people who are now living in them, with the possible exception of England. I do not like Britishers, but involuntary respect compels me to hand it to Englishmen wherever I see them. They have the weakest chins in the Old World and the strongest wills still to survive and achieve.

I cannot understand Americans who worship the life, culture, and mental attitude of these failing civilizations. But they do. Nothing, not even the Great War and our experiences then with their rapacity and their resentment of our qualities can cure us of this obsession. If the League of Nations had been called the League of Arts, nothing could have kept us out of it. We spend more every year staring at their scenery, buying their pictures, statues, tapestries, and the very stones of their ancient castles than would be required to open every door in the world to our commerce, our inventions, our morals, and our institutions, all of which are more vigorous and vastly superior to anything along the same lines in Europe.

But we seem determined to degrade our own powers to achieve better things by this idealism of old things abroad. We note disparagingly the imitative characteristics of the negro race in their relation to the white races, which has in fact delayed the development of their peculiar genius in many ways;

but we show the same tendencies toward European culture with less excuse. I suppose we buy their old things because we feel the lack of the tone of time in our civilization and collect this stuff to produce that effect.

As a matter of fact, there is no virtue in the tone of time. Virtue comes alone from our own achievements. We cannot mellow what we are by what we hang on our walls. This is cheating, in my opinion, such as we do when we chase our ancestors back until we derive a coat of arms from some old swash-buckling knight of the fourteenth century. Very few of them would be acceptable now in decent society. It seems to me safer and more respectable not to admit descending from any further back than our original pioneer American blacksmith ancestors. This is good stock, cleaned and charged with the noblest virtues by the courage with which they endured hardships and built a great civilization. Benjamin Franklin's sister made soap and sold it to her patrons in Philadelphia for a livelihood. It seems to me a more honorable record to hand down to posterity than that of a seventeenth lady whose only distinction was that she had a title inherited, not earned, and that she sat to a great artist for her portrait.

Europe is childish, overbearing, grasping, like an old man. We ought to contribute liberally to its support on that account, as we do to aged parents; but we ought not to ape the senility of old age. We do now limit the quota of immigrants from these countries, but it seems to me even more important

to limit the number of American tourists who go abroad to the aged and mature. The youth of this country should be kept at home until their characters and ideals have been firmly established. I was forty years old before I went over there, confirmed and certified in my convictions as an American citizen, but it was a long time before I recovered my own spirit and wiped the shadows of a weaker world from my mind. Even now I cannot be sure. It seems to me that I detect a foreign substance at times in my thoughts, not so firm or sound as real living makes thinking. And I have known a great many people who never do repent of Europe after they have indulged in it. They get an air of aloofness and superiority. They are sick and disgusted with our honest sins. They have acquired a decadent taste for vice as if vice were one of the arts of Europe, as indeed it is. Now it does seem to me that if we must be wicked we ought to be normally and healthily wicked and call our sins by their right names. It is a sign of degeneracy to be so virtuously sensitive and proud of your vices as so many men and women of older nations have grown to be.

XXXVII

THE COUNTRY AND THE TOWN

A YOUNG man with a mind of high degree and an extensive literary style recently shot off this in a magazine article: 'Gossips are people who have only one relative in common, but that relative the highest possible, namely, God.' He might have exchanged places with his nouns, written it: 'People are gossips who have only one relative in common,' and hit more nails on the head. But at that, he missed by half the number we have in common.

The nearest relative of every mortal man that always survives him is the earth. He is atom and acid kin to it. He springs from it and returns to it, laid back into it, earth to earth and dust to dust, which is closer kin at last than he ever was to his up-and-speaking relatives. He bears but one relation to God, a spiritual resemblance, either real or fancied. Lacking that, he sustains literally no relation to God beyond that of mere material scrapped and to be used again for another form of perishable life, vegetable or flesh. The spirit of him in this case is a disease to be cured by some divine method with which no man is acquainted, whatever the theologians may claim to know about it.

The wisest of us do not actually know much. We can only believe according to the quality of our minds. The favorite notion used to be that such spirits went through a severe smelting process,

similar to that of four thousand degrees centigrade by which pure gold is now extracted from quicksilver, but not, I understand, in paying quantities. I am merely suggesting this, not as a doctrine, much less a dogma, but by way of speculating upon the possible method of purification. Personally, I find it disturbing and unprofitable to dwell upon the reclaiming processes of damnation. I have seen too many damned people in this world, and been too frequently damned myself, not to know that we damn ourselves, and that by an act of will and faith we can always escape from this sense of guilt, which settles the whole doctrine of punishment so far as I am concerned.

But the point I wish to make now is that we are all conscious of being kin to the earth, though comparatively few have more than a creed sense of being related to God. It is a thing we are taught, but really learn to feel. The man who begins life next to land never forgets. He may come up in the world and be carried by his illusions of success far from its life and loveliness, but there come wearying days in his countinghouse when his thoughts fly back like homing birds to that quiet place. His own people may be dead and gone, or he may have lost the sense of kinship to them; but he remembers still where the shadows fell upon the grass, as a child far from home remembers his mother's face. It is the child in him longing for the comfort of that ancient mother of all men.

If he has lost out and gone down in the world with a bad conscience, the same thing happens. There

comes a woeful day when his tears rise like a tide and he knows if he could go back, fling himself beneath the shade of a certain tree for a long, long time, the silence and goodness of the earth would cure and restore him. It would not, but this is the way he feels. The sensation proves and defines the sanctity of our relation to the earth.

As to those other people, born in cities as chickens are hatched in an incubator, they have the same instinct changed to silliness. They are like step-children who do not know how to love the earth; still, they have their transient cravings for its blessings. But few of them can bear to live with it, because its weather and its silence is terrible to them. They are really inebriates, living by the intoxication of the eye and the ear upon the vast confusion of cities and crowds. They may be strangers there, without home or friends, but they require this frightful motion and noise as an addict must have his drug. They cannot bear the solitude of silent places or the diminishing companionship of their elder brethren, the trees. They are waifs blown like leaves in the wind the world makes in passing. They never had the capacity to live, and so substitute motion and noise for life as a sort of artificial respiration.

I do not know anything more tragic to contemplate than these lost children of the earth. They may be learned men or successful men; they may be dutiful or merely beautiful women; but if you dare to realize how lacking in quality and the original stamina of life they are, thrust them back upon

the earth from which they sprung for longer than a vacation period, and watch them go to pieces. They are parasites, consumers. They have lost the valor to produce their own sustenance from the earth. They survive by trade, commerce, inherited wealth, some kind of artificial labor. There is not a drop of honest Adam sweat in them. They are the kind of people who carry an umbrella over their heads through life, whether it is the roof of an office, a factory or a stock exchange. They want money, prestige, power, more rights and privileges than any man can ever earn except at the expense of other men; but they remain unacquainted to the last with real life achieved in the open according to the law which bound the first man to the land for his own good, where there are no fictitious values, but a fair exchange of bread, poverty, and peace promised to those who do keep and dress the garden which the earth is.

One may write very convincingly, however, upon this theme without making much more of a success than Adam did in the beginning when he was ordained to keep and dress that first garden. The Scriptures are not easy to fulfil. I have been tempted to doubt if the very apostles who recorded the Gospels actually lived up to them. I have had a few divine inspirations myself without feeling the least blasphemous; but looking back now, I can see no more than the faintest gleam of them in my deeds. What I mean is that it must be natural, after all, to come short of the glory of God. This world would be a frightfully glaring place if we did not.

The queer thing is that we also miss happiness in the effort. The satisfaction of saints in their piety has always seemed to me despicable. It is a form of deceit never justified by the facts. And the gratified airs they give themselves is not to be confounded with simple honest human happiness. We are entitled to that whether we miss the glory of God or not. Most of the time I am certain this is the supreme gift of His love which still awaits us when we comply sensibly with the conditions; but I have my dark moments when I am tempted to suspect that this instinct for happiness may be a sort of clucking encouragement devised by Providence to keep us up and going, as romantic love is one of Nature's enchantments to keep up the birth rate.

XXXVIII

GARDEN HAPPINESS

CERTAINLY the exercise of our virtues does not insure happiness. My experience is according to the Scriptures at this point — your virtues invite hardship and persecution. I have observed the very good carefully. They are noble souls, totally defeated in this present world by their conscience and their sacrifices. It takes a spunky spirit to escape the Job Scriptures. This is my objection to the intimate companionship of saints. The last one of them has a martyr tune in him somewhere, and if you encourage him with either sympathy or admiration, he will let go and sing it to you in sobbing praise of himself. I am a trifle that way. More than once I have known myself to keen my spiritual nose to a kind friend and chant the tale of some injustice suffered in the exercise of my nobler qualities. It is puerile. No matter how virtuous you are, virtue goes out of you then.

I take involuntarily a sort of ignoble consolation in the fact that the very bad are farther from happiness than the very good, because they have destroyed the foundation upon which happiness must rest. It is written that if we repent of our sins the Lord remembereth them no more forever, which is something that cannot be said of any mortal man. Even if he repents of his transgressions, the memory of them hangs like a shadow in the light of his spirit for-

ever. I have seen these swords suspended over the head of a saint until finally he was slain by them.

As for me, I have never been able to keep a record of my virtues, though I have tried hard enough; but I have never been able to forget one sin. Just let me get in a weaving way with so much as one beam of holiness to light my dark places, and some niggardly little transgression I committed years ago, or yesterday, lifts its head and licks out a forked tongue in hissing comment. I defy anyone, however worthy, to risk himself in the glow of holiness without having a similar experience.

This, I believe, is what is meant by the omniscience of the Almighty. It is in us, a fearful faculty for seeing ourselves which we cannot escape. And it reveals each man to himself as a spiritual bungler every time he frisks within range of his own inner vision. The effect is salutary, but very depressing. I am never peaceful, much less happy afterwards.

It all comes to this: We get wisdom of one sort and another with fatal facility, because the world is full of it, a brilliant or dull sort of ignorance deduced from observation, study, experience, and the prideful exercise of our rational faculties; but we are perpetually short on understanding until after it is too late.

When I came back to these hills to dress my garden in the year 1913, I know now that I missed happiness by the narrowest margin. I was on the right track. I was at home again upon the earth. I felt that peace and steadiness of mind we all feel in familiar surroundings among companions who never

change or move away. The same grass and the same green boughs overhead, the same flowers I had known in earliest infancy blooming like tiny remembered faces in every meadow and on the banks of every stream. The same little footpaths of peace across every hill, winding according to the minds of those happy travelers who made them.

But the most enterprising business man was never more quickly involved than I was in plans and preparations for happiness. The old cabin to be restored and furnished, all about to be cleared and trimmed. I saw the frost crystals blooming in the gray dawn of every morning that first winter. The longest day was too short to accomplish what must be done before the next day. I was in the woods choosing timber for more rooms to be added to the cabin. I was something of a nautilus in those days, without the sublime indifference of that little sailing mollusk to the passage of time. I was in a hurry to finish my house.

But, like the nautilus, I have gone on adding to it year by year according to the widening chambers of my mind. There will be a wall, a pillar unfinished somewhere when my own end comes. I shall probably defer death by an effort of mortal will if I am having another window cut in order to get one more entrancing view of this valley at the very last. I do not know whether this is foolishness or not, but I have left much copy of my mind and spirit written in stones that will last longer than the monument Horace raised to himself, 'more enduring than brass.'

I made a garden and planted it. I was in the fields from dawn until dusk that first spring, watching the plows sink deep in the loam of the land. To me, there is no fragrance comparable in sweetness to the scent of freshly turned earth. Later I walked like an impudent little god of a woman down the rows of young corn. I remember praying for the corn that year during a long drought, not that I needed bread so fiercely earned, but because to see it living and growing was like feeling the green blades of my own vanity spreading and rustling in the sun.

Somewhere in this house there is a snapshot made of me that summer standing up on a load of wheat sheaves. I am wearing a stiff white frock. I am bare-headed and the wind is blowing. I do seem to have a high happy look. There streams across my face something of the light of youth, keen and strong. Love alone can so transfigure us. I am in love, you understand. My heart is embracing this sky, this meadow, these overshadowing hills. I am feeling the wreaths of little blue flowers that bloom beside the streams upon my brow. I am strong and well again, cured of so many sorrows. My heel has touched the earth again. Auteas was right about that — if you believe in your heel and the life of the earth you can recover strength as he did for the next struggle.

I was that child I used to be, let loose like a joyful energy. So this is something I have discovered about happiness: It is not a product of energy, but of chance, a free mind and deliverance from that parsimonious sense of time which no child ever feels.

This marked the difference now between the woman I was and the child I had been. I took every chance then with a free mind and no sense at all of time. I was too young to make plans. I met the future as a lark meets the sky upon the wings of a singing heart. I was nearer kin to God then and had a wiser sense of life than I shall ever know again.

The simpler creatures manage life more gracefully than we do. I have often envied the birds, not because they can sing, but because they can fly. They own everything from the tallest tree top to the farthest meadow's rim; but they have no sense of possession, no baggage to carry. They endure more hardships than we do and have a better time. The difference between them and, say, the communists, is that they are not acquisitive. They do not want to own everything in common. They are honest about that, and no man is. He must be either predatory or competitive. He has an instinct for ownership which he is determined to satisfy.

This earth would be settled by squatters if a comparatively few people did not hold titles to most of it. The latter are safer neighbors than the migratory class to which the communists really belong. They are a kind of human locust swarming over the earth now, never to be confounded with the earlier pioneers. I suppose in time we shall get rid of them. If we do not, they will destroy us. Then they will turn upon themselves. They are by purpose destructive, according to some rascally notion of gain. Their piety is a sort of missionary malice couched in the noblest deceit of language.

But with all the virtues and aspirations the best of us claim, it does seem strange that we make such an awkward art of living. We are more successful at increasing our capital and decorating ourselves with worldly distinctions than we are at increasing our income in happiness. This is essential. I have no patience with the piety of defeat which yields the point and declares that happiness was never meant for us in this present world, but reserved for us in paradise — a damnable doctrine which reflects upon the goodness of God as they do who lay their misfortunes to Providence when they alone are responsible for them.

It is we who miss our cue. We suffer from some blindness of the mind which leads us to mistake the circumstances that produce happiness. Nothing will satisfy us but riches, when we know that relative poverty insures more peace and fewer responsibilities. We have built a social, industrial and commercial civilization, so expensive that it cannot be financed. And the more wealth we get the less capable we are of achieving our own lives.

It is the laborers, servants, and professional people whom we employ that determine the conditions under which we exist, which is a form of frightful tyranny. We get the idea or the ideal, then pay some one else to achieve it. An architect draws the plans of our house. Carpenters build it. A decorator chooses the furnishings, and servants keep it. A landscape artist lays off the grounds and we employ someone to dress the garden, because we lack the will and skill to do any of these things.

I do not think we should give ourselves such airs about art and culture as we do, seeing that we buy most of the mere effects of these things and that they are really produced by a class of people with whom we do not associate. No man is really learned who speaks his wisdom instead of practicing it. No woman is really cultured because she is up on art and music and literature, or because she wears beautiful clothes designed by a modiste, or because she lives in a splendid house, or because she is surrounded by people who think and speak well about what they know and see and exquisitely feel. She is merely the living portrait of many arts accomplished by other people. I should call her the decadent mollusk of refinement, never to be confounded with that woman depicted a while ago in these pages as the more endearing type of Southern woman. They have their occupations. They are amazingly executive when it comes to ordering others to do it. They have taste and piety and know how to exercise these virtues.

The effects of the theories about the art of living which I have been recording in these pages are plainly visible in this valley. The gaping logs of the one-room cabin left by the Cherokee Indians have been restored, and so many rooms added that it stretches a distance of one hundred and thirty feet — pieced together with open entries, winged with a long vine-covered court on one side and a living porch on the other side. So you may see through this house to the valley below or the hills beyond, as one should see through a good man's

heart to the scenes and Scriptures which account for his existence. I doubt if an architect could have drawn plans of a house so satisfying to the spirit.

There is no color scheme inside. To my mind, a house furnished in a strictly harmonious manner seems to be designed for publication and read by guests, but not to be lived in at ease in your own private everyday moods lest you break a note by moving something of a blue shade to that place which calls for orange-yellow, or by dropping your old green coat upon the divan covered with iridescent tapestry. Even the company bedrooms in this house are so plain and comfortable that a guest might feel at home in them, clean and fragrant, but faded; little messy conveniences in every one of them to delude the occupant into thinking he or she is not a transient there, but may stay a long time. And the living-room is such a humanly gifted place that I may leave my walking shoes on the hearth upon a winter evening and they will add a note of peace to the firelit scene, as if they were warming and drying and resting after a hard day's walking out of doors in bad weather.

Not one thing in this house is to be admired, but is to be appropriated and used for your ease. You are to shine and talk, hold a book in your hand to taste now and then, as in the old days a gentleman sipped his wine. I have seen very dull people exhilarated before my fire on a winter evening; I have also seen very bright ones let go their weary wits and nod. These are triumphs which color-scheming hostesses rarely enjoy, because you feel that you

must sit up with their harmonies and take note or be damned.

Besides, these women are never contented for long with their furniture or draperies. They must tear them up, send for the decorator and try some other effect. I do not change my furniture or move it about. Let the scenes of the world and all fashions change. I have laid my inside scenes like one of those prayers for peace and honor to be found in the Episcopal prayer book written and finished. All you have to do is recite it. God has been familiar with it for a long time, and would probably be astonished to hear a new word or phrase in it.

There is an old-man chair here which, by all the canons of art, should never be found in a cabin; mahogany, with hideously carved legs, toe nails sticking out, the arms finished with two human heads, females, but not goddesses — houris, I should say. The springs in the seat have weakened in precisely the right place to make sitting in it more restful. About as often as an old man is barbered, this chair is rubbed up and the faces of the ladies polished; but it is never moved from the corner beside the fireplace. I have observed that the elderly men who come here invariably choose it as their resting place. There is a huge couch beneath a long row of casement windows on the living porch which has enticed some of the stiffest, most elegant people known to modern society in this section to relax upon it and fall asleep, when by all the rules of polite conversation they should have been erect and vocative.

This is boasting — I admit it — but not of my possessions. I am simply showing the kind of mind I have toward a house, to fill it with snares of peace and good-will whatever happens to art. It is not a bad idea. You excite less criticism and confer more happiness. It cannot be done by an interior decorator. He has an expensive eye and a furniture collector's intellect.

By the same token, I have declined the services of a landscape gardener. My idea of a landscape is a good deal of it, preferably green, and merely frilled with flowers, with the trees of an original forest surrounding the whole thing. I planted my flowers years ago, perennials, with much the same mind the Lord had when he said to the original creatures and little leaves, 'Be fruitful and multiply.' They do. Poppies, peonies, gladioli, zinnias, marigolds, phlox, dianthus, snapdragons, like good hardy people of the soil in bloom, making a thousand wreaths of loveliness around this green hill in their seasons. No wet-nursing to keep them alive during a drought, no coddling to preserve them through the winter. They die down as we do, and come again, as we shall do.

During these first years here I was near the verge of happiness, at least by anticipation. If my mind could have rested I might have made it; but what with writing a book or two every year, conducting the farm and building everything from barns to stone walls that popped into my head, I lacked the leisure to be glad.

It seems to me now that I indulged in too much

self-expression without looking for the reward of gratified vanity such persons usually crave. Comparatively few people have ever seen this valley or know what has been accomplished here. I have occupied it much as I shall presently occupy my grave, alone, but doubtless with a great deal more activity than the narrow confines of a grave with a tombstone over you can possibly afford.

I cannot think what made me so furiously industrious laying scenes so rarely to be praised. As to that, we must always wonder why the Lord required such limitless spaces for His creation and made so many unintelligible stars. Fewer would have been rarer and shown to a better advantage. And what measly sight-seers of the heavens we make, always snooping and squinting at His handiwork without being able to find out anything about it, with no mind to comprehend the glory of these populous heavens.

There must be another audience somewhere. Surely the Almighty has had more encouragement than we could give Him, more inspiration than our pathetically inadequate existence affords Him. I am so religious at times that I can conceive of a great council chamber of creators located upon one of the grander stars between burning suns. Not that I crave more than one Lord to serve. When we consider the Ten Commandments and the rules laid down for our obedience in the Scriptures of our Jehovah, it is apparent that no man could serve more than one God; but in certain moods one likes to speculate in gods by way of the most gallant and adventurous spiritual exercise.

The thing that confounds and depresses me is, Why are so many of us born? Why is there so much of everything anyhow, when we can understand and use so little of anything? And what strange madness is this in us which perpetually compels us to add to the sum total of everything? I have had fearful thoughts along this line — the dreadful fate we are under to keep on thinking and doing, because if we stop something happens to us, a slow and monstrous decay. And at the end of it all, poor old Solomon — after he had been King of Jerusalem and ruled a long time, after he had built his golden temple and won his reputation for being the wisest man — sitting in his royal robes, tired of his crown, tired of his wisdom, calling to us down the ages, 'Vanity, vanity, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.'

He gives this conclusion a note of authority by signing it, 'Thus saith the Preacher.' But I have always felt that if Solomon had been a better man he might have been a better preacher. Like father, like son. David was a fine, true singer of the hearts of men; but I cannot think he set a good example for Solomon in his youth, which accounts for the depressing wisdom he acquired by living.

I never take one of these headers in spiritual speculations, however, without falling to pieces afterwards. I seem to suffer from some kind of nervous prostration of the soul. In these ailing moods no wise man or great divine could comfort me. I am longing to hear the Word preached by a simple man who has lived a good little life and who can pray

like a child. It is like taking the shortest, narrowest path back home by faith.

I never have believed it is a far journey to the real kingdom of Heaven. If you start off with great preparations for a long pilgrimage, you may be sure you have missed your way. There is in the heart of every man a fair and lovely land, never betrayed by his transgressions, never sold to the world and never darkened by mortal wisdom. I have been there sometimes, an ineffable place. As a child I lived there.

These little old preachers mentioned a while ago are the only pastors of the children we have been left among us. They do not know us now, they are not acquainted with the world in which we have learned so much; but they know where every man's land of Canaan lies, and they have only one Rock of Ages tune that leads to it.

Looking back, we can see how smart we were when at the time we simply followed some instinct in the right direction.

For years I went on trying to create my own little kingdom of Heaven here behind these hills. A place visible to the naked eye, very deceptive in its loveliness and silence. I had sense enough to keep the world out, which was not difficult, since I have never been one of those popular writers whose doorsill the people seek. And I was rarely tempted out into the world.

XXXIX

WAR

DURING the spring and summer of 1914 I put seventy acres of the valley under cultivation, added eight rooms to the old cabin, and wrote a serial. The inspiration of love or of any consuming ambition greatly augments the powers of even an ordinary person to achieve. This is the reason why men in love frequently accomplish so much for a time, then fall back into their former state of indolence. The illusion of love has failed. It is by nature a brief enchantment. This is the reason why the man fired by ambition frequently accomplishes prodigious tasks far beyond his normal capacity to achieve.

I was inspired at this time with the hope of winning a happy ending to what had been a harsh sentence in living. I was creating a very small world to fit me behind the world at large; and this period, I should say, was about the morning and evening of the third day at the business. Things were beginning to turn green. I could see my little herbs of the field glistening in the early morning dew, and my sun was shining. I remember a certain notion I had then, which has remained a part of my personal definition of the Lord — that besides being almighty and obviously beneficent He must be a happy God every time he created another world, divided the light from the darkness in that place and set up all the miracles of life there.

This notion was not so blasphemous as it sounds written out in words. One cannot copy His omniscience or His almightiness, but it does *not* seem to me nearly so profane to give one's self a few airs about having imitated Him in a small way that turns out green and triumphant like a field of corn, as it does to dig down and snoop the heavens with the idea of proving there is no God at all.

I had only to take a whiff around the farm in those days, have an altercation with the carpenters about another window needed to keep the cabin from looking too much like a fortress, then retire to my study upon the farther rim of the forest and copy the green leaves of my thoughts for the next chapter of the serial.

On the third day of August in that year the Great War began in Europe. The editor of 'The Saturday Evening Post' sent his first batch of war correspondents across the following week. I was to have been one of them, but I had promised another serial for another magazine which was still to be written. The editor would neither release me from the contract nor risk me in the war zone until this copy was delivered.

I suppose it would require one of those latest expositors of the mysteries human beings are, an alienist, to explain why disappointment over being detained brought on the first attack of hay fever I ever had. There is more psychology than pathology in our diseases.

But I was determined to go to France in 1914. I had been living at such a high tension nervously for

some time that nothing short of a bloody war could have quieted me and reduced me to a normal condition. The motive here confessed was overlaid with the usual noble emotions; but this is a truthful record of my mind, which is sufficiently nearly related to human minds in general for me to risk the assertion that a great many other people did valiant service in France who were attracted there by a similar motive. We seek reactions from what we are in excitement. The use made of us under these circumstances proves the shrewd economies of Providence by employing our lower instincts to trap us into the performance of the greatest, most unselfish services, else very few men would volunteer for military service, and very few women would have volunteered for canteen service in France

I hurried off somewhere, wrote that serial, returned to New York and sailed for Liverpool all within thirty days.

I have written briefly of my impressions during this harrowing period in 'My Book and Heart.' What we know now is that the most victorious battles and the most disastrous defeats never settle the issues involved. The Great War has increased our debts, doubled our problems and added incredibly to the moral confusion of our times. Still, if there should be a call to arms in this country tomorrow, I doubt if I could bear the mortal ignominy of being a pacifist.

There is no sense in war. It is the way we are made that brings on the red fury of arms. Neither the ambition of politicians nor the greed of finan-

clers could draw a nation into war if the people were not so easily moved by an invitation to shed blood. It seems invariably to produce a state of terrific exaltation, similar to a religious revival. I doubt if this is due so much to the survival of brutal instincts in men as to some provision of Providence against the ultimate emergencies of mankind. When law, civilization and the artificial restraints of society fail him, he will still have his fists and a faculty for believing in God. These two capacities alone should reproduce men of better quality than the shrinking creeds of pacifism. Whatever we believe theoretically about peace, we should always be ready by nature to fight.

But another set of youths must grow into the pugilistic period now before we could actually stage another World War. My observation has been that the soldiers who fought in the recent one are more or less shell-shocked. I have employed more soldiers here than any other class of men since the war, because they are more intelligent and better trained; and no matter how brave the record is they have left behind them in the Saint-Mihiel drive or the Argonne Forest, they are more concerned than other men to avoid personal difficulties. One must think it out to understand them; their reputation for courage has been established beyond any shadow of a doubt so long as history lasts. There is no reason why a battle-scarred man should prove his courage, which is probably the chief reason why men fight. They are the only admirable pacifists in the world; and if it comes to the test, they will have more to do with

keeping this nation out of war than a World Court or any other talking method we can devise, however wise or diplomatic.

War, however victoriously ended, is not a profitable subject to discuss in the retrospect. It dies down in the emotions of men and passes into history. After that, the next generation reads history and discovers what burdens and strange defeats were entailed upon their future by these victories. But I am setting down one incident in connection with my experiences in France by way of proving a theory I have — that merely by living we fulfil more prophecies than the seers of the Old Testament ever dreamed of. We are becoming terrible predicators of the future.

It was in October of 1914. A clear starlit night. A battle was on. News from the front ran through Paris in whispers all day. Now darkness and silence. No one could sleep. I came down from my room in the old Saint James Hotel and stood in the street, reaching a long look through this tomb of terrors that had been the gayest city in Europe three months ago. Not a soul in sight, not the sound of a voice or the rumble of a wheel, peopled now only with the shadows of great shapes. Yet in this fearful stillness these very palaces and spires seemed to listen, to be waiting for something about to happen.

Then from the high distances came a rhythmic sound, thunder throttled down, stars purring, a pulse beating faster in the heavens. Now the ominous roar of motors. Swift as swallows in flight, I

saw them rise above the horizon and flash by like great silver birds through the searchlights above the city — German aeroplanes coming to drop bombs on Paris! Red blasts, earth-rocking detonations! This tomb of terrors gave up its dead, a frightful population of men and women rushed half clad and disheveled from their hiding places into the open street. They shrieked, babbled, waved their arms, milled and circled, frenzied with fear and hate.

I stood aside like a mere leaf of life not yet caught in this whirlwind of dreadful passions. The scene was no longer linked in my mind with war, but with something else far back in memory, associated with quietness and peace. Then it came back to me, that night so many years ago, the world not yet in sight, the quiet heavens, father thrusting his arm out in a gesture like a scythe aimed at all the spaces overhead; the child I was then, bare feet resting staunchly upon the toes of his boots, clinging to him, face upturned to him, feeling like any other young bird about to be borne aloft upon magnificently gesticulating wings.

Through all this uproar of a panic-stricken people, in a strange city on the other side of the world, forty years later, I heard again the very tones of father's voice: 'You will live to see airships up there flying like a flock of birds.' Then mother's sharper tones breaking in upon this rumbling prophecy: 'Come in and go to bed,' calling me away from the temptation of so great an imagination, anxious lest I should be birthmarked mentally with that mad

passion to fly which had frequently cropped out in father's family.

Well, I had lived to see his prophecy fulfilled. But what a fulfillment! This happens frequently to the best efforts made by seers. The world twists the tail of their prophecy and makes it come true like a disaster.

On the twenty-third day of December in this same year of 1914 I was at home again in the valley, sitting beside my own log fire, very quiet, but not serene. I was suffering from a curious pallor of the mind, not due entirely to the dreadful scenes I had passed through in the war zone. We were homeward bound from Liverpool when the boat struck a mine off the coast of Ireland. This catastrophe happened in the middle of the night, and I was still convalescing from the peculiarly sickening sensation of suddenly standing on my head in the berth with no such acrobatic intentions. I could not forget the tremors which passed through that ship as if it had been a living body pierced to the heart, the awful heaviness with which it settled back into the sea, the moments like ages of dreadful silence that followed, then the roar and confusion on deck, the sibilant sounds of many voices hushed to whispers by fear, the rush of bare feet along the corridors inside as the passengers fled for the lifeboats, which were not needed after all. And I shall never entirely recover from the recollection of that jagged hole in the side of the boat, so frailly mended, nor from the sound of the water pouring in and the rhythmic strokes of the pumps upon which our lives depended.

I am wondering if the critics who found 'My Book and Heart' the record of a narrow and monotonous existence can claim one year filled with so many varied activities as the year 1914 was for me. And I am merely offering it as a sample of my years in general.

XL

WIDOWHOOD

THE older you are the greater risk to your happiness, and even to your peace, there is in marriage. I cannot conceive of a husband revolving comfortably in the widow's orbit I have measured off and made for myself. Least of all can I conceive of his sitting still in it with any peace of mind. I suppose many other women feel the same way, else there would not be four times as many widows as widowers in this country, according to the United States census.

A widower is probably the most transient manifestation of man there is among us. I have often wondered why this is so. I am no alienist, which is now that supreme authority among us for determining our character and conduct according to our glands; but my suspicion is that marriage once contracted becomes a habit with a man, and that he is the most invincible habit-forming creature on this earth.

You may feed one only three articles of food for a year and he will stick to them as long as he lives! I knew one who cured himself of indigestion twenty years ago by taking a cup of tea and two pieces of dried apricot for lunch. He has never varied his midday meal from that day to this. If his wife died, I suppose he would marry again precisely as he goes to his club and orders that cup of tea and the preserved apricots for lunch.

On the other hand, marriage is a state of love for women — barring the alimony class, of course — and they are so narrow and personal in their devotion that they do not so readily transfer their allegiance to another husband. Apparently they are not so enterprising or broad-minded in their romantic emotions as men are, though we seem to be widening out considerably in these latter years. It would not surprise me if the time comes when even widows may become obsolete, and we shall have no such wisdom among us as a sad, sweet-faced elderly woman wearing her widow's weeds and sitting in the amen corner, or ambling about doing good deeds in the neighborhood. She may have her second or third husband and be engaged in a campaign for a better sewerage system in the city where she lives.

What I mean is that we seem to be growing more like men mentally and morally every day and in every way. I reckon it is all for the best, but it does feel queer if you are a woman and a widow who cannot keep up with the quick step of your times and know yourself to be dwindling away into the narrow, withered-faced relict of your former husband.

I remember one day years ago, decorating myself with such ladylike views as these in a conversation with Mark Sullivan, who had just refused a story I offered for Collier's Magazine. He listened kindly and patiently until I had probably exhausted my repertoire of noble sentiments for that day. Then he seized his hat and made for the door, thought better of it, paused, looked back at me curiously and delivered himself of this warning:

'You may be that good, but if you are you are bound to be lonesome.'

For a moment I experienced some kind of faint alarm, as sinners must when the preacher gives them one last chance at the end of a revival to repent and be free men. It occurred to me that I had better hurry out while the spirit moved me and do something rash. But I could think of nothing sane, discreet, and becoming to do that would also be rash. I am not so sure it is conscience that makes cowards of us all. It may be the vanity of self-respect that holds us in check.

After all, I have not been so very lonely, only slightly peeved as I grow older at the implication of having lived a narrow, dreary life.

Years ago, after the death of my husband, I adopted one of the milder sins of our times, much as my mother, who was a very frugal woman, used to be wasteful with pins because she insisted that a little inexpensive extravagance was good for the soul. I do not know about that; but I am still so ashamed of my transgression I will not confess it, although with a discerning eye you may see it for yourself as one of the complimentary details in the picture on the frontispiece page of 'My Book and Heart.' Otherwise I am far behind my times in yielding to temptations.

If you had only one lover when you were a girl, and married him, and if you lived very quietly with him until death parted you, not taking in more than the spiritual edges of the world, you do not know men; you know only one man. 'As to the rest, you

know some by their reputations — some good, some not good; some who will lead in prayer. The great majority are beyond your ken because they will not lead in prayer, nor contribute to foreign missions, nor even to the pastor's salary. If you have been a preacher's wife for nearly a quarter of a century, you entertain a vague suspicion of such men without having any information about their real characters.

This is what happened to me as long as Lundy lived. A man was a sheep or a goat, and that was the limit of my powers of classification; a very remote way of thinking about them.

I do not know how it may be with other widows. I suppose if they have a competency, and can afford to employ an agent to look after their affairs, they frequently retain their social and romantic ideals of these wonderful beings and remain peacefully ignorant of their sterner manifestations. But if you must earn your own livelihood and manage your own affairs, you will discover that you come face to face and hand to hand with men every day in every way upon a totally different basis. You cannot practice the arts and policies which made you so successful in managing your dear husband, not if you mean to be an honest, upstanding widow. Your mourning veil may appeal to their compassion, but it will have practically no effect upon loosening up their business sense in your favor. What is more to the point, it is a sly, unfair way of playing upon their sex or your sex to expect concessions in your favor.

My idea of a 'widow indeed' is somewhat broader

and more practical than Saint Paul's. I am not objecting to his requirements — that she shall have washed the saint's feet, if her piety takes this form, and if she can find the saint; but I do not see why she should be more diligent than any other woman in 'following every good work,' unless, as I suspect was the case with the widows in Timothy's church at Macedonia, she was a charge upon the charity of that church and repaid in humble service to the brethren. The modern widow is not so reduced in circumstances, even if she is left without means. She can usually earn a living, though it may not be so good a living as her husband provided. In any case, a self-respecting 'widow indeed' now is one who takes a job instead of charity and performs it with valor instead of tears. The pith of honor in such a woman is not to play the feminine rôle to any man for largess or advantage in her affairs. Even on this basis she is apt to get more than is coming to her if she deals with the right man. The great majority of honest men actually shrink from the responsibility of handling widows' funds lest some unavoidable loss occur.

On the other hand, there is an average, I should say, of at least ten mite collectors for every widow in existence. They are easily recognized, however, by the noble and vicarious disposition they show for being her financial savior or her Aladdin genius in a get-rich-quick scheme. Not long ago I had a letter from such a victim. She is a stranger to me in the flesh, but I should recognize her in paradise — an elderly widow, religious, full of kindness, always

protected, whose creed is faith in the goodness, honesty, and kindness of others.

She wrote to tell me that she had just invested all she could spare in an oil well. And she asked me to pray that this money might bring her ten or even a hundred fold in return. Imagine the Lord babbling in wildcat oil speculations to answer even two widows' prayers! Teach us some sense by not answering such prayers—which is a thing many people wiser than widows do not know about the functioning of the Almighty toward prayers. Maybe in time we shall learn that the Maker of all laws will not break one natural or moral law to save us from either death or bankruptcy. It is no use to call upon God like a fool to save you when He has endowed you with the wit to save yourself if you will only use it.

The last I heard of this widow she was the poor dear shorn lamb of those oil speculators. Where one wins her golden fleece, a thousand are clipped clean of their honest wool.

After the death of my husband I suffered for the first time in my life from the inferiority complex. I was left not merely a widow but strangely benighted, like a foreigner who is totally ignorant of the manners and customs of the people with whom he is to deal. I suppose many women have had this experience, and may think it is grief. It is terror and uncertainty. If she survives it honorably, with her head up and her banners flying, she will be obliged to shed her widow's veil and be born again mentally no matter how soundly she may have been converted previously to the wisdom of spiritual things. She

will be obliged to study something besides the Scriptures, and get stout secular doctrines for dealing with a vastly competitive and acquisitive world. Clinging to the cross is nothing to the way she must cling to her own good sense. The Lord encourages us to cling to that symbol of faith, but it is no use clinging to the world that way. She must step around in it with a firm tread and do business with her spectacles properly adjusted.

Therefore I am recording it as truth here, hardly earned, that an up-and-doing widow's mind is one of the most remarkable mental phenomena in existence; and I defy the ablest metaphysician to analyze the thing. It is made up of feminine faculties, stiffened, sharpened, sweetened, soured and tempered to any emergency, and she has ten emergencies where a man has one, because every one with whom she deals perceives that she is a woman and proceeds upon that basis. She is much more of one than the average woman ever learns to be, but, good heavens, what a furtive, brave, serpentine, dove-good use she has got of her little old knitting-needle faculties!

I spent three years after the death of my husband walking softly beneath my widow's veil, studying the situation which the world was to me. I worked hard, made no investments and suffered from one long nightmare of terror and grief. I know exactly how it feels to have lost my right hand for achieving life, to get up cured of the wound, but with only my left hand to support me, when I had never been obliged to support myself at all.

Widows deal with men if they earn a living, or even if they do not. The thing which alarmed me was the discovery that I knew nothing about men, and that they are mysterious. Their mental processes are different from those of women, although emotionally and every other way the family resemblance between us is so strong as to be misleading. They have a different way of planning and accomplishing their purposes. They have a conscience, probably a better and more scrupulous conscience than we have about a few things, but theirs has a wide-open loose end, through which they can pass out to achieve without a qualm some great deed that we would never pay the price in piety to accomplish.

I perceived with a sort of terror how able and uncanny they are, due chiefly to this circumstance. They have by nature more liberty of action than we can afford to exercise. This is one reason why many modern women look so queer and out of drawing. They are making the experiment. The result is a parody. No originality, they are aping men, as a feebler race imitates a stronger race. If I am any judge of the real moral greatness of women, they will suffer a revulsion of sensibility presently and take to their heels. It is safe and honorable to associate intimately with one's husbands, sons and father, and discreetly with one's Christian brethren in the Church, though I am wary about that; but my notion is that it is dangerous, indelicate, frequently degrading to what we are, to associate too intimately with men in their political, professional, and other manifestations.

I may be wrong about this. My opinion may spring like hypocrisy from cowardice, because I have not the courage to risk the losses these women sustain. My only excuse is that I came up in a different age and had my morals and sense of womanhood formed under different influences. If the modern woman does hold fast, and win and prove herself an asset instead of a liability in this civilization, I hope to bow my old gray head to her and take off my shoes before her in reverent recognition of the fact that she will have become the greatest pioneer of the ages, against the greatest odds, with the noblest courage.

In the meantime I am wearing my shoes, holding my neck stiff and regarding her over the top of my spectacles like a harsh, narrow-minded old mother who would like to snatch her daughters from a dangerous maelstrom and set them to the tasks at home that would make men instead of bandits of their sons, and proper maidens instead of adventurous flappers of their daughters. The best mother I ever knew never cast a ballot, but she established her sons in the way they should go. She has been dead for years, but she is still voting these men in every election.

Maybe I should have omitted these reflections. When you have survived your own world, and are now merely the spectator of another world in the making, you cannot be qualified to pass judgment upon it. I let that go with this polite apology and return to the problems which faced me so many years ago when I became a widow.

XLI

ALL SORTS OF MEN

AT safe distance I have spent much time observing men and the world they are making through the field glasses of my mind. I still prefer it to any world women can make. This is not an indication of turpitude, but due, no doubt, to my gender and the association of ideas. We know that men are strong by the deeds they have performed, the cities they have built and the cities they have taken; by the courage they have shown in war and in the face of wildernesses to be conquered, and by every hardship which women endure but cannot overcome. So I instinctively look up to men.

I am not defending myself, although women have made great strides recently in discovering how weak and unworthy men have always been of the confidence we reposed in them. I am not reposing much confidence in them, but I am simply admitting that the tilt of my gaze toward them is instinctive and prayerful, not rational, any more than personal faith in God would be regarded as reasonable by a materialist. But observe the advantage I have of the rationalist, who is reduced to the dirt dauber's creed of worshiping his own intellect, while I enjoy the more becoming distinction of spreading wider wings upward.

My ideas about men spring from the same shrewd

source of financing my future by faith — that evidence of things hoped for but not seen. I am determined to remain the weaker vessel and to hold them to the higher altitude of superior beings. It is more profitable and the surest way of forcing them to make good. They are only too willing to part with their responsibilities to these valiant modern women who are so anxious to prove their own ability to assume these burdens and bear them.

I have no doubt there is a smile up the sleeve of every man in this country as he watches the return of his women to servitude, not the old domestic bondage, but every other kind. Millions of them bread winners, filling positions at half the price these positions paid when men filled them. No wonder men can afford an eight-hour working day. Enough women are working longer hours to more than make up the difference in the common-to-all income. No wonder there are so many strikes. They can afford the luxury and disturbance on the sweat of the women.

In the same way they are serving men in politics, because they can reach a class of constituents the male candidate cannot reach, and because they can practice arts he never had to get him elected. I am wondering what will happen when these women discover that they cannot make this a good little world to live in by amendments, and that all their labor and devotions have been spent for the promotion and gratification of men, as usual. My prediction is that there will be such a shrieking strike as the whole National Guard cannot put down, because

every striker will rush home, and fling herself upon the bed to do her shrieking.

I hope I shall live to see that holy day. It will mark the defeat of men and their return to duty in a strangely diminished frame of mind. But I shall never see it. The thing will come to pass so gradually, one woman at a time coming to her senses, and then taking refuge in nervous prostration or some other condition obviously and naturally beyond the power of men to reach or control her.

The only man I had ever known was, as it happened, different from other men. He desired above all things to be meekly and truly blameless before the Lord. God was his public opinion. I was amazed, you may say, to the point of fainting spiritually to discover that men in general have no such instinct for piety. In his heart I do believe the veriest saint among them would shrink from a too notorious reputation for being merely good and entirely virtuous, although the least and meanest one of them wishes to appear great, if it is only to one woman, no matter how short he is in personal virtues.

I believe they are all more spiritually inclined than we are; but heavens, what unscrupulous spirituality! It is a sort of noble side line they carry. They crave as we never do the sensations of power, exaltation. This, I believe, is the psychological explanation of why many men take to intoxicants before they feel the need of artificial stimulants which the hard pressure of this swiftly moving age now brings. They want to feel like gods, they wish

to enjoy the sensations of being hard-boiled, when by nature they are polite, timid little fellows. They wish to feel for a moment the power in their heel to kick the world around, though as a rule they remain sufficiently sober not to lift a foot in the actual experiment.

The fool wants to be witty. The Smart Aleck wishes to light all his candles at once and watch himself shine. The man with a bad conscience longs for the false courage to swank about like a supervillain and rejoice in his iniquities. And there are those who drink to drown their sorrows, although my observation is that they will do it before they have any griefs or legitimate depressions from weariness or hardship to overcome. They are really suffering from that masculine embarrassment in sobriety of knowing how limited they are in power and other godlikenesses which all men perpetually crave. If even all the women in the world would concede these qualities, humor them with sufficient admiration and reverence, we should have no need for the Eighteenth Amendment, seeing that these several classes of men would be already sublimely intoxicated.

They have not made good as gods in spite of these divine retchings, but they have built a magnificent world. I will warrant there is nothing comparable to their achievements on any of the other planets of our solar system. But you will not find the mark of one feminine finger upon the architecture of this one and very few traces of the feminine imagination in these great accomplishments. We

have our good points, but they are not architecturally or literally constructive. We are, I should say, at best the patient conservators of what men make, win, and produce. This is the reason why dissipation is far less excusable in women than men. They have their vanities and virtues, but no such boundless egotism to keep up and satisfy. When we are forever physically incapable of being the builders and achievers that men are, I do think it is regrettable that we should imitate that vice in them which is merely the mortal weakness of a sublime quality.

We have our feminine deceits, ten thousand, but obvious and appealing. Men have another kind, which also spring from their passion for augmenting themselves, not endearing themselves. The vainest woman who ever lived does not crave the admiration of men as men crave that of women. They want it whether they want her or her love or even her property, whether she is young, old or blind. This is the reason why they cannot be truthful or quite honest in their relation to us. It is not the desire to deceive, but to shine, to rule and overcome us with their minds and their wills.

I do not think any exercise of our recent rights as citizens will ever overcome this handicap. The fact is it is fatal to do so. The moment a man perceives himself diminished to his true proportions in a woman's eyes, she becomes offensive and repugnant to him, and he is right about that. She was originally designed by her Maker to be the complimentary mirror in which Adam might gaze to spoof himself to greater endeavors.

When I found out all these things about men it had a queer effect upon me. I distinctly recall facing about, thinking Lundy up out of his dust and reviewing him in the light of this new information. Had I ever really understood my husband? I never shall know. That perfect illusion which love is still clothed him, and I could make nothing of all my remembered evidence beyond the kindness and patience and prayers of our life together. I remember still with pleasure how grand and superior he used to look when he flared into flames of fine eloquence that put my light out. But just let any man try that now! I can see the difference every time between the mere man of him and his eloquence. I am not moved. I simply regard him with a listening eye while I divide the light of his words from his own darkness, whether real or potential. If I should be won by his eloquence or his arguments, he has the advantage. Presently I shall be taking his advice or adopting his opinions against my own woman's judgment, which is bad business, if you know what I mean.

As near as I can tell the truth from memory, it was this instinct of inferiority which led me to earn my life and my living in strict retirement after my husband's death. I perceived that the training I had had with him in the scriptural simplicities of living was no adequate preparation for competing with men in any way. I might hold a candle to them, but I'd never hold my own with them. And trying to get a working knowledge of them at the age I was then would have been like trying to learn a foreign

language after you are forty when you were born with a lisping, stammering tongue.

There was another consideration that influenced me. As a wife I had practiced the habits of obedience. My husband laid the scenes of our life and controlled our destiny. I simply helped him do that. I had been confirmed in the womanly attribute of being guided by his stronger will. What I discovered at the end of these three years' thoughtfulness is that every man's will is stronger than any woman's. She may outwit him, but she cannot outwill him. It was not my idea to dizzy around as a widow, being guided by this man or that one in my affairs. The best thing I could do was to break the entail of that beautiful attribute of obedience I had as a wife, tear it up like a scrap of paper, and retreat to a safe distance. I meant to lay a few scenes of my own devising and to become the captain of my own fate, let the Lord do as he saw fit about my soul.

I was near to being tired of my soul by this time from worrying with it and straining spiritually for so many years to the exclusion of all earthly profits. Later, I did resume intimate relations with it, because once you have adopted the ideals of a spiritual life you are meanly impoverished without them. You are degraded in your own consciousness as bitter, worm-eaten dust without this sublime reservation held by faith, that there is eternal life no matter what griefs you have had or what happiness you have missed or what an ordinary person you have been all your life.

I feel these limitations keenly, and have always

been extremely anxious to find out for sure that I really am extraordinary and immortal and worthy of my own admiration at the very last. I wish to die proud.

This is something that can only happen to us in the next world, where I hope to forget my mortal limitations and some of the ridiculous as well as tragic mistakes I have made here that caricature me now to myself. For the same reason I am not inclined to interpret too literally and painfully those Scriptures which intimate that our memories will be resuscitated with us. I do hope this is not obligatory. For I should need no memory to recognize Lundy or Faith. I should know them as one comes again in full possession of his mind and heart after a long sleep. My idea of a happy resurrection would be to rise from my dust cleansed from every embarrassing and diminishing recollection, because this is the only way to be as prideful as one expects to be in Heaven.

Grief, however poignant, is like a wound, if you are not by nature infirm, but a normal person with a strong mental constitution, you recover from it as you would from any other wound or sickness. So I recovered from the death of my husband. The health of my spirit returned, and with it the idea of happiness began to freshen in my mind.

Faith was married by this time. I was alone and free to live that life of mine which I had wished for as saints long for immortality. My feeling has always been that happiness lies somewhere in Genesis, in those first scenes of man. For this reason I set

out for the hills behind the world in Georgia, where the days come and go much as they did in the beginning, where human speech is such a rare sound that the dogs bark when they hear it in this valley, and where the song of birds is the real language one hears. It is a place where there is no wealth, no learning, and much natural wisdom of the woods, the hills and streams. There are a few people, but I know them only as one knows a little prose, a little poetry and a few Scriptures, not personally nor intimately.

I have written at some length in 'My Book and Heart' of this old cabin and the surroundings, but I am setting down now the real reason for coming here. It was to escape the mind and will of the world, to practice my own will and mind in living and so find happiness—that animation of the mortal spirit which is far more refreshing than peace.

It was my way of laying claim to my own life. I am now in a position to say that I very much doubt whether there is such a thing as a human life which belongs exclusively to one person. It is something we borrow from other men, from books, from a thousand sources, and something we spend or lend likewise; but life does not belong to us as it does to other living creatures, nor even to the grass. We are the most dependent of all God's creatures, not only upon one another, but upon the beasts of the fields and upon everything that lives. And nothing we win, even if it is everything, can possibly satisfy us. I suppose this is one of those terrific provisions

of Providence to keep us doing and moving toward some far-off divine event.

What follows is the record of my adventures in this business. Launcelot looking for the Holy Grail never traveled farther or endured greater hardships than I have in this narrow valley looking for happiness. I have worn all my virtues to a frazzle and I am about to grow old in sorrowful defeats without attaining even the bright rim of the cup of happiness. And now, when maybe it is too late, I have discovered the mistake I made. This is scarcely reason enough to go on with these annals, because when at the end I prove it and set it down in plain words, not one who reads this tale can avoid making it. We are the perpetual victims of an illusion. We may as well take what comes, whether it is happiness or not, and avoid the struggle.

XLII

VARIOUS TYPES OF WOMEN

I SUPPOSE women are one of the essential provisions of Nature, but in our minds we have never been satisfied with the arrangement. We feel that there is some kind of imposition connected with it. We were simply thought of afterwards; we were not an inspiration of creation, but we were created to meet a necessity afterwards. This makes a difference. We are not quite normal as men are. We still have a futile instinct to escape from what we are. Thousands and thousands of years have not made us contented and at home in ourselves. No man ever wished himself a woman, but ask any one of us and if she is in a truthful mood she will admit that she wishes she were a man. I have no doubt Eve regretted she was not Adam.

Circumstances have favored us. From winning privileges, protections and perquisites as we came up through the ages, we are at last getting some queer advantages of the situation one way or another. But this makes no difference. If we obtain the balance of power we seek, live the lives men live and do the things they do, we shall still be women, subject as usual to fits of nerves and tears on account of the long strain of not being quite normal and at home in ourselves.

But when you have been a woman a long time, and have grown accustomed, you may say by de-

feat, to the sensations of being one, you may look back through your mind, which is quite different from looking back through your history, and pick up much strange information about yourself which you would never discover except in the retrospect.

For example, seeing the woman I used to be more clearly than I could possibly have seen and measured her then, it occurs to me that I may have been a kind of idiot, femininely speaking. What I mean is that I seem to have been almost totally devoid of that engaging self-consciousness which makes women noticeable and attractive to men. I am embarrassed lest my husband may have found me delinquent in the mere airs of femininity. I do not recall ever being coquettish or feeling attractive; merely honest, kind, devoted, and at times freakishly witty or gravely intelligent.

Maybe this was due to the fact that I was not pretty as men see prettiness, and knew it, although I always felt beautiful, and must have been absurdly contented with this inward conviction. Still I have known many a homely woman who was amazingly attractive, like that heroine in one of Madame de Staël's novels to whose 'bright dark homeliness' she refers so flatteringly. That is the point — if you must be homely it is better to be dark about it. With black hair, black eyes and even a swarthy skin you have only to turn on your light from within to glow. I am too fair, not enough contrast between my blondness and any brightness of expression I could turn on. Besides, I have what would be called a lofty brow in a man, which gives me a damnably

noble look so far as beauty is concerned. During the thin years of my earlier womanhood it was out of all sweetly feminine proportion to the lower part of my face.

I am only suggesting a probable explanation, you understand; not that I believe it myself, but hope some one else will. The feeling I have now is that I missed part of my conduct as a woman at a time when it might have contributed some to that happiness which I have also missed. What I should like to know is whether women who have flown their banners in many men's hearts during their youth have memories of happiness that I have not got. Do they recall those episodes with pleasure? Or do they recall them at all? I have a queer, ruthless feeling that I could have forgotten many men, and remembered forever only one. I wish I knew what so many other women know about this. Maybe it is idle curiosity, but it feels like lines I failed to recite in living.

At this late day I wonder what Lundy really thought of me. I have observed this — that very few wives know what their husbands think of them. I even wonder sometimes with the gravest trepidations what he would think of me now. I have grown so sensible. I have almost lost the gift of doing anything foolish and sweetly feminine, if I ever had it. And yet the woman I never have been sits and looks through this bright veil of mysteries, as we sometimes gaze reverently at the masterpiece we never could have painted.

The only consolation I get in such a mood is a

mean one. The women I have known who enjoyed all these benefits do not impress me as being eased by their experiences. I can think of a dozen who were belles in their youth, who were happily married, who enjoyed all the distinctions society and wealth can confer upon charming women. And now, at my age, they have a curious, beautifully painted, bankrupt expression, as if they had lost several fortunes and were facing the direst poverty in their old age. I may be mistaken about this. They may have acquired that restless, frantic look characteristic of them from habit on account of doing things instead of sitting for years thinking things as I have done.

Still, I feel like a stranger among them, as if they had practiced some kind of feminine wit and dexterity in living that I do not know. I believe it is something they learned of themselves which I cannot learn. They know how to make an attraction of their modesty.

Now I have often wondered whether modesty is a cultivated virtue or a quality of femininity. If it is a virtue to be attained by taking thought, I have lacked it through the whole of my life. For I have never been consciously modest, nor even felt the need of protecting myself anywhere, nor the least anxiety about remaining neatly folded and decent to the last.

One of the mysteries of feminine consciousness which I have never fathomed is why so many women feel in some vague danger from men. Why do they look under the bed to make sure no man is

there? Years ago I was going to prayer meeting one evening in a city accompanied by a spinster. She was a dear good soul, but you may say almost conscientiously homely. This was during that period when we wore broad black leather belts to gear in our shirt waists and skirts. We were stepping primly around the corner to the church when my companion leaped into the air and screamed. Clinging to me in the wildest terror, she vowed that a man had seized her by the belt from behind. It was no use to ask her if she was sure it was a man: they always know it is a man if anything happens to them. He alone is the plausible explanation. It was a fact that she had lost her belt. The buckle had slipped and it lay directly behind us on the pavement. Now why did she do that? One might be tempted to suspect some indelicate lesion of the imagination if it were not for the fact that good women, pure enough in heart to see God, are subject to these vagaries.

When I had lived alone in this old cabin for ten years, without ever suspecting it of having a man concealed in it, a friend came to spend a month with me. She was seven years my senior, and you may say the very pincushion of every feminine virtue, very modest. Nevertheless, every evening before she retired she would take her candle and go man-hunting through the house, upstairs, downstairs, and even into both basements — just to make sure no man was in it.

Sometimes in the deeper, darker hours of the night she would appear like a ghost in my room to

whisper excitedly that she was sure she had heard a man in the house. Then we would start forth to find this wraith of her imagination, two elderly women buttoned to the chin in our plain middle-aged nighties, her gray hair and my thin hair skewed so tightly that it left nothing to be revealed concerning our faded faces — terrible looking, but harmless creatures, bearing our quaking candles, thrusting them into such corners and places as burglars only inhabit in the feminine imagination. If we had actually discovered one it would not have been we but the burglar who must have fainted at the sight of us.

She could never realize the absurdity of these fruitless adventures, but I always felt embarrassed and apologetic to mankind in general. A woman must have more presumption than I have ever felt to imagine herself in any kind of danger from men.

But that is my point. They are the more womanly women, and the dearer kind to men. The telepathy of terror they experience toward this imaginary man is none the less telepathy when they are not alarmed if they are in social sight and distance of men. I suppose in the dark or when they are alone and unprotected their fears are due to the survival of a primitive instinct, out of date now, like the appendix in the human body, but brought up with them from that far time when women were in real danger of being seized and borne off by some marauding knight on his saddlebow.

I suppose in the daytime, in the parlor or on the street, when these same women are armed to the

teeth with every charm, it is the same instinct of self-consciousness in a victorious mood. They are on the offensive then and more or less irresistible. For men certainly are more easily attracted by the self-conscious woman, whether she is shrinkingly or boldly so, than they are by one who sleeps soundly unmindful of them and who goes about her business the next day with no animated sense of them.

What I mean is that modesty of this kind is the fine art of self-consciousness, and to be without it is to be femininely stupid, no matter how much other sense you have. At my age, I suppose no woman with a proper sense of dignity would want romantic attention. It would come to the same thing as being caricatured. Even at that, I do get tired sometimes of seeing in every man's eye with whom I deal that I have come to do business with him or that he has come to do business with me. I feel the need of a little more versatility of manners between us. I should like to take a pleasant feminine shot at him as I see other women do, but so far as I know I have never capered one such glancing remark at a man, even if I met him upon my own copygrounds, much less in a business way. And I have wished for compliments, not aimed at my brains or my diligence, as other women wish much more fortunately, but no man ever lies in that beautiful way to me.

I am not regretting the dignity of my conduct, nor the awful dignity with which I am treated; but I am merely intimating that it is dry stuff being a woman when some dull wisdom in you keeps you from acting altogether like one. It is a tearful thing

to know that you will go down to your grave loved and honored for the good you have done and not for the sweetness and loveliness of the woman you were or might, could or would have been if you had used your mind less and your talents more.

It would be interesting to know how the modern woman is coming out at this point. They are bolder than we were. I read of one lately who left her husband listening on the front porch while she went back in the dark house and shot the burglar whom he was too sensible to face. And it is absolutely amazing to me how many of them kill their own husbands upon provocations that formerly drew only a few tears from a wife. To slay your husband, no matter what kind of husband he is, seems to me a frightful kind of suicide. Formerly only men killed their wives. Now they flunk and desert them. They have lost some power of endurance they used to have with all their faults in the married relation. As near as I can make out, two people who marry now are not one in the sense we used to be, because from the start they contemplate no such involving unity. We are founding a precarious domestic life upon the grounds of mutual intolerance.

I do not know how they have managed it, but it is perfectly clear to an observing person that modern men are shy of modern women not as fellow sports but as prospective husbands. Maybe it is because so many women sue for alimony, when they used to give up and do the best they could according to their marriage vows. Maybe it is because so many young women now will bring suit for damages on account

of a breach of promise and prove the latter by the signature of a love letter.

In my day, if a girl was jilted she died of a broken heart, or became an old maid, or married better, and nothing was said of that earlier affair. Getting damages evens matters up, but it does seem strangely gross and unwomanly to do such a thing, as if the victoress sold her self-respect in the open court for so many thousand dollars. Can the definition of self-respect change with the changing times with a woman? I have often wondered how they feel when they win such a suit.

The effect of all this courage in women is to develop the bump of matrimonial caution in the best men to the point of absurdity. I remember very well the first hero we had in American fiction who dared not write letters like Saint Paul, with his own hand, to his lady love, lest these should be used as evidence against him. This was Annixter in Frank Norris's novel, 'The Octopus.' We thought at the time that this was a false note in the story. Now the world is teeming with these discreet young bachelors.

The fashion of what we are is changing. Women do seem to have a better working knowledge of men than they had even a dozen years ago. But I am wondering how it will turn out. If you are by nature the weaker vessel, it is a dangerous thing to break too many of the stronger vessels. We need them. The safest and wisest way of getting the better of a man if you are a woman is by sticking to him.

XLIII

MERE MIND

THE trouble is that I have been too much concerned in writing the scriptures of human hearts according to the light of my own heart. One cannot be such an interpreter and figure at the same time as the sophisticated heroine of an adventurous and highly colored existence. Will no one appreciate the delicacy and courtesy I have shown in failing to reveal his sins by not recording mine? Then, indeed, I should deserve the charge of having lived a particularly narrow and uninteresting life.

No one will bury me on top of a high mountain in honor of my brilliant transgressions or make a pilgrimage to lay wreaths upon my tomb later. Any respectable person could commit them and get away with it. I have a temper which perpetually glows like a coal of fire on my altar. The lies I tell as a rule are good little lies offered to comfort somebody, or to shield myself from the snooping eye of the uncharitable. I have no more conscience about that than softly closing the door of my chamber when the devil passes by.

I am an ungodly, intemperate and uncharitable woman when it comes to bearing with laziness and shiftlessness. I still believe an idle brain is the devil's workshop. If I exposed some of the convictions I entertain along this line, they would forever bar me from polite society. I am so profoundly conscious

of my own sex that I cannot endure the license of modern conversation on this subject. Not only that, but I am so mean-minded that I cannot believe the people who indulge in it have decent minds, no matter how high and noble they look at the time or what excellent diction they use.

I believe firmly in the fig leaves of language and that God still walks in the garden in the cool of the evening, looking for that damned Adam of us all. I believe the mere minds we have lead to mischief. They are roguish and unscrupulous. I believe that we are in touch with something else, spirit, which leads to righteousness, honor, and things of good report. I am not pretending, however, to keep up this connection.

Just let me make a good resolution, especially to the effect that I will exercise charity toward all and malice toward none, and I am sure to fly off the handle before that day is done to administer mortal justice merely, you may say, as a public service against a neighbor who has cheated, or beaten his horse unmercifully, or started a scandal, or gone a-fishing while his wife and children remain at home to work in the fields — none of which is my business. Still, I will attend to it as if it was.

I have long since made up my mind that there is more mortal relief in judging people and taking the consequences of having the same judgment meted to me again than sitting like an innocuous saint with my mouth shut. If that scripture should be literally and universally obeyed, how could we develop public opinion? And after all is said and

done in the name of the law and religion, does not public opinion remain the strongest moral force we have for controlling the conduct of men?

I may be a trifle short now and then in my contributions to charity, but no one can accuse me of not being liberal and constant in my contributions to public opinion. The result is that, so far as I know, I have one of the worst-weathered reputations in this section. I am coming to that presently. In the meantime, if you take my word for it, there is nothing novel or inflammable in the sins I have committed.

I am not excusing myself for the lack of valor I have shown along this line, you understand; but I am offering an explanation, which relieves me in a large measure both from blame or praise in this matter. When you have had the Ten Commandments striped upon your conscience with a switch at a tender age, when you have spent nearly a quarter of a century practicing the beatitudes in spite of your own carnal desire to raise the dust occasionally with an instinct more effective in mortal affairs than a beatitude, and when you have spent the remaining years of your life serving a sentence to hard labor, a flirtation seems a frivolous waste of time, even if such an affair affords you the gratification of being a worldly wise and tragically experienced woman.

I have contemplated this kind of diversion much as one considers a wild speculation; but after mature reflection I have always decided not to invest, because it seems to me the man gets the diversion and

the woman gets the black eye, no matter how sweetly and beautifully and modestly she conducts her romance, especially if it ends in marriage.

What I mean is that it is useless to pretend to be very good or very wise. We cannot be, and overcome one another as frequently as we do in the long competition of living. I suppose this is one reason why righteousness and wisdom make such slow progress in this world and have had so many backsets. The sensible thing to do is to choose a life within your capacity to achieve and do most of your thinking along the line you have chosen.

So I have gone on, writing a few books on the side, but laying the scenes of my mind in the valley. I can go out any day and trace my real thoughts for the last ten years. By the looks of them it is easy to infer that I have no great mind and not much money to spend. But it is also clear that I was thinking and planning for happiness, not for riches. The forests still stand taller and greener than when I came, though the timber in them is worth three times as much as my whole estate here. The red hillsides have been changed into green pastures. It has been like taking over the care and maintenance of an old, sick, and impoverished relative to restore the land to health and vitality. But it is fertile and willing now. I make no apologies for what it has cost. I have been too wise to keep books with Nature and the weather. But I doubt if what I have spent in buildings, dams and breaks in all this time equals what the average woman with the same income would have spent on clothes, operas, motors and journeys from her

favorite summer resorts to her favorite winter resorts in half as many years. And I still have my investments, while she must repeat her expenses each season if she keeps up her indulgences. It all depends upon your taste in living and your idea of pleasure whether you spend lavishly for the splendors and gayeties of the fashionable world, or moderately for the long peace of a quiet place, round quiet days and starlit nights.

I do not appear to have been brilliant or very extravagant anywhere; but the only place where I fail to show at a modest advantage is on the banks of the creek which flows through this valley, gory with mud in the spring and winter floods, clear and sparkling as a happy woman's eye at other seasons. Twice every year I contend with this treacherous watercourse, twice every year it rises and sweeps over the land. Afterwards there remains not a vestige of my works along the banks to restrain it.

Still, this valorous worm of a creek is near to being my dearest possession. The time was when my heart was filled with anxieties and fears for those whom I loved. Now there is no one to love and nothing to fear. The time was when I was at grips with poverty and every vicissitude. Now I am no longer very poor, and I do miss my vicissitudes as a demoted soldier misses his decorations for gallant service. And there was a time when the world inside the Church was fiercely critical of me and my works. Now the weather has changed and I miss the lash of the harsher saints. But I have a happy presentiment that when all my works are finished, and I am

a memory grown faint in the minds of men, I shall still be an aged willful woman in this valley, prancing majestically back and forth along the banks of this creek, ordering fortifications raised against its violence. The world will have passed and I shall have been reduced to littleness of consequences there; but I shall have something to do, one last fight to win. This is something to which to look forward when you have nothing else to win.

This record, as truthful as I can make it, must read like a very well-constructed plan for a kind of happiness suitable for a person of my age and gender. But looking back through these years, I cannot recall any such experiences. It seems to me that I have always been in an anguish of labor or in a state of suspense, always looking for more burdens to bear, giving more bonds for title to my own life and liberties. It may be that happiness is a state of unconsciousness, and that I have been too consciously looking for it; but I am beginning to have a faint spiritual intimation that I have practiced my Scriptures to the wrong tune. I am not so sure now that the key-note of a good life should be self-sacrifice.

I am finally beginning to believe that the Scriptures were meant to preserve us from too many awful sacrifices, and that I may have used them too much like the shroud of my mortal mind. I am ready to concede that Nature is full of tricks to serve its own ends; but it does seem beneath the dignity of the good God to have persuaded the simple minority to sacrifice themselves for the profit and comfort of the indifferent and unrighteous majority,

which is precisely what happens. It is really written that we shall present ourselves living sacrifices wholly acceptable to God.

I wish I had remembered and understood the meaning of that passage sooner. It would have saved me much hardship and left more space for human happiness. It comes to me now that it is less exhausting to make one's self wholly acceptable to the Lord than to those of our fellow men who can fish for our services with these Scriptures. For they want as many sacrifices as you can make, and will give you as many of their burdens to bear as you will carry; but our heavenly Father only demands a right spirit toward Him to make us reasonably safe in our relations to our fellow men — which would by no means cover the terrific labors and sacrifices some of us have made along this line.

I am coming now to the closing scenes of my life as I have lived it in the past, because I mean to close these scenes. As a Christian, I have had the wrong training; as a middle-aged woman, it will be difficult to go against this training; but I do hope to have time to make the experiment.

XLIV

ISN'T LIFE EXCITING ENOUGH?

WHY should one take to strong drink because this is now a fashionable perversity practiced against the prohibition amendment, as ill-bred people disregard other people's respect for law and decency? We depend too much upon artificial stimulation. There used to be a home-brew known as fine conversation which was much more delightfully intoxicating than any brand of bootleg liquor now known to polite society. Lacking conversation here, I have frequently risen to a state of happy inebriation by following a particularly entrancing train of thought.

This is one thing I have observed about gambling — it renders a man or a woman sinister and silent when other people present are obvious and vocative. They are mortgaged mentally by a fixed idea. In this connection I recall a visit made years ago to Monte Carlo. I missed the thrill. All my life I have been such a desperate gambler against fate, adversity, and the weather that the games I saw played there seemed childishly inadequate so far as gratifying an adventurous spirit is concerned. Men and women simply pawned themselves for a little gold, lost it or doubled it in a moment, and then repeated the experiment indefinitely. My notion about such people is that they lack the courage to sit in the long game of life and play it according to the rules.

I am something of a piker, financially speaking;

but I have always entertained the conceit that I might have done very well in Wall Street if I had not been more profitably engaged. My dealings have been chiefly with the earth and editors. Both are frightful risks. A flood or a drought may destroy your harvest. The forensic mind of the editor may have changed while you are writing the thing he thought he wanted, or you may have missed your cue and produced something he never dreamed of. My rule is never to kick against the pricks. What is the use of adding wounds to your misfortune, because if you push one of them he can give you reasons frightfully diminishing to your vanity for turning down your copy. They are the most convincing men on earth at that business.

I recall only one triumphant exception in my twenty-five years' experience with them. In 1915 I had a contract to deliver three short stories to be published in a New York magazine. When they were delivered, the editor wired me that he would take them, since he was obliged to do so under the terms of the contract, but that he did not want them. The implication was not complimentary. Two days later I arrived in New York, called the editor of another magazine and offered him the same stories at an advance of two hundred dollars each on the original price. He agreed to take them sight unseen. I hurried off to call on the other editor who held the manuscripts.

He was astonished, and obviously not glad to see me. But my manner was so regretful and apologetic that he recovered his more vehement faculties at

once. Never have I heard such a scathing criticism of literary composition. But I let him do his worst; I urged him on to speak yet more contemptuously of the things until words failed him.

I do not remember ever feeling meek in the presence of mere man, but any woman can look meek. I folded my hands and regarded him like a shorn lamb in a cold wind.

He accepted the compliment and relaxed. He said he regretted the necessity of being perfectly frank, but he thought under the circumstances it was his privilege to tell the truth about those stories. He was willing to keep the things, but they were not worth the price he had promised to pay for them, and so on and so forth. Oh, certainly not, I agreed; they were not worth anything to him, but to me, everything. My honor was involved; I could not think of allowing him to keep them, and so on and so forth, in a sad, low tone.

This contest lasted an hour before I was at last obliged to fling off my sheep's clothing, give him a glint of my real mind and demand them. He yielded then only on condition that I send him another story within the year. I agreed on condition that he should pay for it at once in advance, for no other reason that I can think of than to see how far I could go, seeing that I had started so glibly on this adventure.

I delivered the three condemned stories to the other editor, having told him the scandal connected with them, and returned to my hotel with checks amounting to nearly four thousand dollars.

This indicates that I have some natural talent for speculating, but I am thinking my career as a writer has lasted longer because I have had the shrewdness not to develop the gift.

There is a wideness of the mind not dependent upon the experience of a broad manner of living, if you know what I mean. But let that go; I suppose after all is said that can be said one way or the other, a man's point of view about such matters depends upon his quality and his taste. Many people mistake jazz for joy, a loose life for a full life, successful selfishness for the survival of the fittest and the rationalism of a dirt dauber's intellect for wisdom. Mine tend toward the great simplicities, whether they are actually to be attained or not. I prefer to clothe my egotism according to the nobler scriptures defining immortality rather than in the less expensive worldly vanities.

This is a mean advantage to take of those critics who lack the spunk of such divine egotism without ever being able to prove immortality is an illusion of the mortal mind inspired by the fear of death. I have my anxieties about the traveling passports of saints in the next world; but if it is possible to obtain a furlough from paradise, I shall apply for one as soon as I am incorruptible and spirit-proved, return to this world and pinch a few friends and critics who now look askance upon my professions of faith. If I shall have developed no more than one wing, I mean to spread it in a smile, rustle it triumphantly in their ears by way of whispering, 'Thou fool!' But I do not suppose this will make any dif-

ference. It has already been written and proved that 'even if one rose from the dead' they will not believe.

So my years have gone by. If you have read this record so far you will have perceived that these last ones lack the glory and loveliness of those earlier years. I am better known in the world and not so dependent in spirit as I used to be upon the angels in Heaven. I have not outgrown their ministrations; I seem to have lost them. Sometimes at night in this lonely house, lying awake, I remember the child I used to be in the little room at home, when I literally believed in my own guardian angels, one at the head and one at the foot of my bed.

What sublime experiences children have, and how serenely they accept them! I used to fall asleep nonchalantly conscious of these angels and their protection. Now if for one fleeting moment I could be aware of such hallowed companionship, I am certain my corruption would put on incorruption and I should rise from that bed a spiritual body. I should be young and lovely; and the next morning, though I might look the same, I should be changed. I should have the heart of a child, know no evil, believe everything and draw all men to me.

Very few people enjoy the privilege of laying the scenes of their own minds. They are controlled by circumstances, conventions, and that windy weather of other people's minds known as the spirit of the times. If a man conceives the ambition to do such a thing, the easiest way is to climb into an attic, close the door and write out the scenes of his mind

on paper. And this is pure fiction so far as he is concerned, even if he produces a volume of the profoundest philosophy. He has not lived it; he has merely thought it.

This is the reason why I have never bowed my dizzy old head to the greatest thinker of them all. I have done too much active living between the devil and the deep blue sea to be petrified into a state of admiration by a mere system of thought. Let him try out his theories on the land, in the street, in the commercial or industrial world, in society, even in the Church, and find out how long they will last.

But watch the philosopher! He keeps out of the ructions of real life, which is the only personal evidence he shows of being one. All that stuff he has written is for you to practice. I never heard of an up-and-doing ubiquitous philosopher. He may lecture, but he does not live; he only exists. His books are popular or unpopular, but the man as a man would prove ineffective if he should be put to the tests the simplest of us must pass in order to matriculate as serviceable scholars in the real arts of living. I should be willing to match one of my narrow circuit rider's days in living, or a half of one of my own days spent in this green attic of the hills, with one of Herbert Spencer's days anytime; not that I know his private life, but I have my suspicions that there was not much of it. He was too entirely absorbed in recording his ideas to have had the energy and initiative to dramatize his thinking into deeds.

The more one reflects upon the business rather

than the theories of living, the more do creeds and philosophies shrink in importance. It is like starting on a long and arduous journey burdened with luggage. You are handicapped by too many doctrines and complicated systems of thinking, which interferes with that moral elasticity so essential to courage and a good conscience. You may become famous for your piety or your wisdom, but you do not arrive. Respect for a doctrine or for logic trips you at the very moment when you might have made the grade. You may found a transient school of thought, obtain the flighty tail of a following; but there is no profit beyond that of gratified vanity in such an adventure. The world will presently swing through the lightening dust of your great mind and go on its way as if you had never happened — as this earth would scarcely be spattered by radiance if it passed through the flame tail of the brightest comet.

XLV

AS WE SEEM TO OTHERS

It is a queer experience to gaze into the crystal ball that your mind really is and behold there the image of the woman you were and are and ever shall be, in spite of everything you have done and can do to glorify her.

The life you live never reveals the person you are by nature; only the kind of person you have drifted into being or have been constrained to become. So your autobiography, however intimately written, is not the record of you, but of your feelings and performances under the circumstances, what happened to you by the day or by the year; what you lost and what you won. All of it is history manufactured by you in living, but not you. Some luminous dust of your trials and triumphs obscures your vision and makes the record shine at a time when no one who knew you then noticed the faintest rim of a halo above you.

It is your nature to put your best foot foremost if you can get so much as the toe of it in print, so you instinctively drop the curtain on this scene or that one in your life because one hint of it would give the reader a glimpse of you, not garnished for the moment by your good deeds or extolled by your rhetoric of these performances.

I do not suppose any one who reads 'My Book and Heart' will ever suspect what a commonplace person

the author of that record really is. I was frequently moved to tears and laughter while I was writing the thing. Sometimes for whole days I felt translated into the good words and the noble ones I used to set down merely the things I had suffered and achieved.

But you have only to observe the impression you are making upon the people who see you every day and know your literal expression, your disposition, the cut of your eye, to have the soaring wings of your vanity as an autobiographer clipped. Very few of us would recognize one another by our scriptures, but we do it by the personal impression we make. For example, I have never felt that I should have been personally attracted to George Washington, although I respect and admire him as the Father of his Country. I do not think I would have invited him to a dinner party at my house even if I had been in a position to do so, because I have a very strong feeling that he would have been a short circuit socially. The conversation would have had to be adjusted to him. Our minds would have had to be the obsequious footmen to his outrageously noble soul. I do not believe tradition is responsible for this notion I have of him, but some intuition of the man which not even history can obscure.

On the other hand, I have a vaguely regretful feeling that I might have enjoyed dining with Abraham Lincoln. And I am certain that I should have felt comfortable and blessed on merely the rim of the presence of Robert E. Lee. He would not have missed me even if I had been a very plain and undistinguished person in the darkest corner of the room.

He would have contributed a glance of simple human recognition. I have the feeling that if I looked very insignificant he might have made the space between us with a fine complimentary air of having just seen some one with whom he particularly wished to pass a few pleasant words. I have had that happen to me more than once in the course of my life.

When you have never learned to sit gracefully like a lady lyre in your chair with your draperies drawn close at exactly the right place; when you have a motionless countenance socially and a blunder-buss mind, and you are kept busy putting out the fuse of it lest the thing should go off with the explosion of an idea too loud for such an occasion — I do not know of any more gratifying experience than to be suddenly soothed by the recognition of a truly great man or woman who apparently does not suspect what an awkward person you are in that company. Such people are never moved by mere manners; they perform an act of social piety to you which springs from the gallantry of a kind heart.

I remember once, before I ever dreamed of such an extravagance as an afternoon frock, I received an invitation to a very fashionable garden party. I wore a shirt waist and skirt. The latter was long and trailed, I hoped, elegantly behind me. But getting my foot caught in it as I descended caused me actually to tumble from the hack in which I arrived directly upon the fluttering edge of that garden party.

This was an abrupt way of entering the social life of a large town where I had been a stranger for seven years. But I made it, due entirely to one circumstance. A lovely woman, distinguished for her social graces, caught sight of me sitting upon a bench pathetically removed from the gayety of the occasion. She said she had been looking for me. Had I had any punch? Innocent stuff, a kind of sublimated lemonade. Did I know many of these people?

I had had no refreshment, and I did not know any of these people. I might have added that my knees were still trembling from having fallen out of the hack, but I made out to accompany her. It was like walking in a rainbow of smiles and good-will. Presently I came to my other self, a woman I had never been before, a social creature at ease. I had liberty, and remembered making several bright remarks, not droll, but neatly and prettily funny, at which every one laughed and looked at me as if I were a pleasant surprise.

I caught the tune, even the step, of that occasion. I remember mincing from one group to another, holding up my skirt with an air, as conscious of the lace in the frill of my petticoat as any other woman present was of her rustling silk petticoats, accompanied through the whole afternoon by that gracious woman who anchored me with a look or a smile until my poor tight-fitting lid as a preacher's wife came off and I was near to being a song which was not a hymn. I may have been ridiculous for all I know, but I felt very light in my heart. Maybe

this was happiness. If so, it was a long time ago, and I am by social functions now as literary critics are by a new novel. I am too learned in the things; I know too much about how they are made and what they cost in jealousies and competitions to enjoy them as I did that first garden party I attended in Nashville so many years ago.

But what I started out to prove was that as one person to another person we are not the same character as we seem to be in history or even a conscientiously written autobiography.

After the publication of 'A Circuit Rider's Wife,' my attributes as a good Christian woman were severely damaged by some of the whispering brethren. Quite inadvertently, the records of that book reflected upon a few of the inside workings of the Church; and Lundy being so tragically dead, these brethren dared not defend themselves by attacking his memory. The only thing left to do was to discredit the witness who had given damaging testimony concerning these matters.

This was how I lost my reputation the first time — an entirely satisfactory item of expense to me so long as the crown I had written above Lundy's head had remained untarnished.

I kept silence, not by way of turning the other cheek, which is a form of piety unsuited to my disposition; but looking back now, I believe I was thinking out a few Scriptures. When you have nothing to lose you have everything to gain. I was in this grand state of destitution at that time. I had lost my husband; I had also lost my reputation

under the same frightful circumstances. But the moment I began to revolve that excellent Scripture in my mind which says, 'Judge not . . . for with what judgment ye judge . . . it shall be measured to you again,' I began to perk up. I had been most unmercifully judged, and here was the Lord's own permission to return the compliment.

I had several million readers by this time, which was considerable advantage to have gained in the scrimmage. I wrote three more circuit-rider stories. Besides having struck a rich vein of the finest human nature, I may have been inspired by some retributive sense of justice, according to the Scripture quoted above. Certainly my motive was not without mortal guile to guide it. But I have known very few effective people who stuck themselves up with a noble motive under fire. My idea is to whip, even if you perish in the fight. I am always willing to perish, knowing well that I shall rise again every time, everywhere according to the Word; but I am teetotally opposed to being defeated. If you do not take too many of the meeker Scriptures without balancing them with the fiercer elder Scriptures, it will be perfectly apparent to any sensible person that the Lord does not sanction submission to any unfriendly fate.

I stuck to my text honorably, however, and confined my revealing wit to certain regrettable methods in the government of our church, and I may have touched lightly upon one or two doctrines which I believed to have been doubtfully derived from the Word. But no man's reputation suffered in these

stories as mine had suffered at the hands of some of the brethren.

Strange as it may seem, my reputation began to improve in the churchly silence which followed the publication of these later stories. I do not know whether I have reëstablished some kind of pop-eyed confidence in my own piety and character, or if I have been merely forgiven. I remain warily and politely on the outside, not knowing what service I yet may be inspired to render this church, which is infinitely dear to me. But I have been comforted with the hope that it has grown more tolerant of me, as I have become less intolerant of its shortcomings. I am beginning to realize how difficult it is to maintain any Christian organization in a world which specializes in worldly values without using secular methods. More courage and more faith are needed than modern Christians seem to have in order to comprehend that the glory of a church does not consist in its wealth and earthly power, but that God alone is the glory of the Church. I have a feeling that if Jesus should suddenly appear among us, clothed once more in our minds with divine authority, He would say to all these churches of whatever denomination, 'Sell all thou hast and follow me.'

It depends upon where you lay your scenes in living what kind of reputation you get, and how you lose it, in case that happens. If you lay them like a good little Dorcas, in the church, somebody will defeat you for the presidency of the missionary society because you are the most efficient woman for that place. If you stretch them like a climbing Jacobess

in women's clubs, a certain clique in that club will pull the social ladder from under your aspiring feet and elect you to the office of kitchen manager for the afternoon refreshments. If you move a trifle briskly in smart society, you are in danger of losing your reputation on the front page of the daily paper on account of having done something newsy the night before the morning after. I know a splendid old gray-haired widow who will not dim the snap in her fine eyes, nor break her habit of having small feet beautifully shod, nor even change the contours of a figure outrageously youthful for her years. One morning this summer she appeared in the striding togs of a smart lady pedestrian and stepped vigorously past a dear friend on her way out.

'Where are you going?' the dear friend called out.

'For my morning walk,' she returned, swinging youthfully down the steps into the street.

'She is doing nothing of the kind. She is going to meet a man!' the friend informed me.

'At her age?' I protested.

'Age has nothing to do with her. She has resigned from her last ten years,' was the indignant retort.

'Still, at this innocent and halcyon hour of a summer morning, a man cannot be such a doubtful person to meet,' I suggested.

The sense of sex has changed its location. It no longer exists merely as a sacred natural instinct, but it has become a conversational feature of the modern mind, leading to the wildest social and intellectual speculations. And there is literally no way of escaping its damaging enterprises.

In any case, if you retain the delicacy of your sensibilities, it is difficult to determine which is the more embarrassing — to have lost the reputation you were so careful to make for yourself or to endure the one imposed upon you by others.

This is precisely what has happened to me. Somewhere along the way during these last ten years I have lost my reputation again. A second growth, to be sure, but one which I fondly believed to be normal and more becoming to me than the one I lost to the brethren. And not enough time left to build up another one before I pass forever out of the zone where all earthly reputations are made!

Imagine the situation — an elderly woman who discreetly retired from the world years ago to spend the remainder of her days in a remote place, basking in the grace of God without making a fuss about it; showing her head once in so often above the horizon with a few neat laurels on her brow; doing a little good here and there, giving herself the airs of a beloved woman — only suddenly to awaken to the realization that she is a terrible old woman, autocratic, overbearing, who has set up a very small but clearly visible empire over which she reigns regardless of the manners, customs, and convictions of her friends and neighbors — when all this time I thought I was minding my own business and dressing my own garden to the profit and delectation of everybody who passed by!

These dear good people have been speculating in my attributes, revising them privately according to their amazingly vigorous but uncouth imaginations.

They have not left one pretty soft feminine sin sticking to me. If I had entered one of the modern professions of banditry or bootlegging, I should have needed less courage than would be required to play the rôle assigned to me. It calls for buckram breeches, two guns, a club and the vocabulary of a sailor on shore leave. The news of my deeds in this amazing disguise have percolated far and near.

We are hard to please. I have frequently pitied women who were criticized for the way they dressed, rouged, or smiled, not knowing how vulnerable many people are to vivid coloring and a Mona Lisa sweetness of expression. Now I could find it in my heart to envy them. It is less embarrassing to be so suspected than to be shorn of one's dearer charms and vanities as a woman, and to be accused instead of setting upon strong men with sticks. You wonder painfully if you actually have faded and toughened so much in the estimation of your neighbors that you have passed beyond the pink and glorified pale of a more delicate feminine transgression.

Mrs. Virginia Woolf, novelist and critic, recently made this statement in an article published in the 'Criterion': 'On or about December, 1910, human character changed.' One must envy her perspicuity, even if she does not mention the exact day of the month when this transformation took place; but I cannot imitate it about so intimate a thing as my own reputation. I do not know how long this primitive artistry in changing it has been going on; but my suspicion is that it began the day I set foot in this valley and started spinning literary rainbows

above the heads of these simple folk who share the attic life of these simple hills with me.

Six busy years passed in love and charity with them before I had the least hint of what was going on. When at last I came face to face with my local likeness I was confounded. Long afterward the explanation occurred to me — in dealing with other people it is a mistake not to take into account the furtiveness of human nature and the guarded indirectness of the mortal mind. Wearing creeds and civilization like garments, we still practice within many of the traits of our primitive ancestors. A man is frequently on guard or on the offensive when we approach him in a friendly tail-wagging spirit, all unconscious of his bristling attitude, due to some weakness in himself of which you are not aware, or to a competitive animosity which you do not feel.

I have learned this too late in life to practice a corresponding discretion in my association with other people. I seem to have an infernal gift for telling what is going on in my mind or feelings. This is the quickest way possible to kick the skylights out of your own reputation. But I do not regret it, having had a grander time telling on myself than most people ever have concealing themselves. I have told the truth too much. It makes you free, but you pay for it. I remember hoping at the time that the scandalous caricature of my virtues might be a compliment inadvertently implied. One must protect himself before his immediate public either with conceit or with resignation. I use both as the occasion demands.

After this experience, I resolved to have done with my various reputations. They are nowhere required of us in the Scriptures. On the contrary, in the second chapter of Philippians, it is recorded that he 'made himself of no reputation.' I have willed mine to the world, which makes them and takes them away. They are too ephemeral and too expensive to keep up. If you have caught the wind of the world in your sails, you have only to do your work to insure your fame — a drastic business, but not nearly so difficult as maintaining your own personal reputation if you have become one of the assets of the public mind.

Besides, the older you grow the less comfortably does any reputation fit you. It is like a garment you used to wear, now out of style with your thoughts and your aspirations, which are stretching away like dreams beyond the mind of this world. There was a time, for example, when it troubled me to be regarded as a tightwad, because instead of contributing in the conventional public-spirited manner to movements, memorials, monuments and notorious charities, I have done my alms in secret. And though my heavenly Father who seeth in secret has not yet seen fit to reward me openly as they are praised who do good accompanied by a press agent, I am beginning to feel more solvent morally and independent spiritually by disregarding these character prints, good or bad, left in passing upon the minds of other people. The image depends too much upon the quality of the mind that receives it to be always reputable or veracious.

But whenever you become truly philosophical, you never are quite truthful toward your own humanness. I may write convincingly concerning this noble ideal of myself. It is held, you may say, on principle; I have never been able to live up to it except by fits and starts. The fact remains that I frequently suffer like a sinner under conviction over the impression made upon a friend, knowing how I have touched up the crooked lines of his character so that it will shine in a sentence more becoming to him. When he reads this sentence later in the book, he never seems to recognize himself. He never comes to clasp me by the hand and regard me with tear-dimmed eyes of appreciation. But just let me write out a fault, and forty men and women of my acquaintance will take offense, when my innocent purpose had been to dramatize one of my own secret shortcomings!

The greatest inconvenience I experience comes from the constant effort to repress my friendly instincts. I have a talent for loving people and would like to use it, but my flare of affection is put out when I perceive myself mirrored in the eye of that man or this woman as a fearsome person, liable to explode an opinion which will reflect upon his dearest prejudice or outrage her most sacred fallacy.

I am not complaining, you understand; I am simply indicating how much worm-and-dust wisdom of this world is required to finance a reputation even for sweetness and light, and that it does not pay if you have any safer way of employing your talents.

We permit conscience to make cowards of us all.

Then by instinct we turn upon the highest everywhere to reduce it to the level of our own conduct. We cannot even get far enough away from our own transgressions to believe in the Almighty. We condemn ourselves to dust and despair, and we cover the whole ignoble performance with flubdub philosophy and think we get away with it. But we do not. We live best by faith, not by what we know or the uttermost that we can think; and certainly not according to our reputations, because very few people know what kind of reputations they have.

XLVI

FITTING INTO LIFE

GROWING up year after year in a place like this requires more studious application than taking a master's degree in a university, where you attend lectures and have a course of reading to defend you from thinking your own thoughts on that subject. It is a fact which you discover for yourself under the circumstances that 'knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.' We are at best no more than the imitators of wisdom. We borrow it, show off in it; but I have yet to see the faintest trace of natural wisdom in man, though the lower animals seem gifted with enough of it not to worry about their fate, whatever fate it is. I reckon this is the reason they remain lower, the damned harnessed victims of their content, as we are the more aspiring victims of our discontent, doubts and anxieties.

I do not think, for example, that a man ever lived who could have conceived the idea of peace. That is something handed down to us by inspiration and tradition from the great beginning. The Lord alone knows what peace is, and He declared it — 'On earth peace, good will toward men.' We have been repeating that Scripture for ages as children recite verses without the mind to comprehend the meaning. This is not hypocrisy on our part; it is our very nature to be incapable of peace.

After a while you get to the clear place in mind where you can see through so many theories and philosophies, even professions of faith, you know that they are no more than the defenses we throw up against our own weaknesses and fears. One of the touching revelations of this kind to me has been the shrewd way we shift for ourselves at the very last. We get a marvelous confidence in the goodness of God then. We come clean and do see Him, whether we were ever before pure in heart or not.

The last deathbed I attended was that of a notoriously wicked man. No saint could have been more serenely at peace so far as his immortal future was concerned. He had worked hard and sinned fiercely. No man, it seemed, was his brother; but he lay there upon his dingy pillows beneath his ragged quilt with the innocent eyes of a child. He had done with guilt. He was out of pain so far as the Lord was concerned. Lying so wanly weak, never again to move hand or foot, he assured me that he was ready to go. The idea that he would be off presently upon an immeasurable journey was fixed in his mind, accompanied by no fears.

They who stick to their creeds and the meaner mortal facts we all produce in living cannot comprehend the courage of a man like this. In considering his case they remember their favorite damnation doctrines, but never their own transgressions. Nothing will convince them that the Lord is not a theologian, but a Creator; and that a history of His will would be a history of the one fundamental law, not as we understand law, but what He has made it,

followed whether you keep it or break it by inevitable consequences.

This man had broken it in his flesh, and was dying for that reason as surely as if he had cut himself down. But now he was forced at last to keep that last most important part of it. With the vision of a child he had learned the meaning of God. He rested serenely upon what we preach and so rarely have the courage to achieve — real faith in God, and it had turned out precisely as the Scriptures promise — eased him of every fear. His sins had been removed as far from his consciousness as presently his body would be. I felt very close and soothingly kin to him, and reverently amazed at this perfect miracle of faith; also glad that he would die and escape that pit of himself into which he surely would have fallen if he had survived.

When you get far down your slope of time, however, and care less than you used to care about being the heroine of your life dolled up in your best deeds, then you can take a look at yourself according to the mind you have now calmed and cooled by the years, and you may come into that last and greatest of all vanities — the boldness to portray the person you really are.

Most people think they do that when they confess their sins; the worse they are the better they are for this purpose. My notion about that is if you must boast, it is more polite to proclaim your virtues. I have always been very courteous to others about that. But the queer thing is that I have never felt that my virtues really belong to me. Lecky's 'His-

tory of European Morals' knocked the last ray of conceit out of me about being even a chaste woman. First one virtue and then another seems to have been thrust upon us according to the self-protecting instinct of men against frauds in paternity or some other economy for their comfort and peace of mind.

I am not complaining, you understand. It has all turned out for the best long ago; but I am just saying how queer I feel about having had decency and honor thrust upon us like foreordination by men, instead of choosing these distinctions for ourselves according to the word and will of God as we think we do. I have wondered if other women feel the same way about this. But I have never had the courage to ask the question point-blank. I have a sort of premonition that most of us are so ignorant of the processes by which we become virtue-bearing in an unvirtuous world that almost any woman might resent the question.

But I suppose our sins do actually belong to us. However, there is practically no originality about them. We can only commit two or three, the others are mere variation of the same perversities. My notion is that there is not much satisfaction to be had from exposing them. If you make an art, a literature, or a science of your vices, the result is some kind of puerile decadence, not entertaining to normal people.

In any case, I have been a very dull person along this line. To the best of my knowledge I have never committed an interesting sin, nor one that even held my own attention for longer than the moment it

took to get rid of it by prayer and repentance. For this reason I am obliged to confine myself to the moderate activities of that narrow and monotonous existence already mentioned with becoming heat in these pages.

Looking back now through the mirror of my mind, the thing that astonishes me most is that nothing seems to have changed me. I made my little history of courage, honor and sacrifices, and from start to finish I can trace the silent, invincible child I was through all the women I have become in various periods of my life. I lived the whole of it with a curious mental reservation which was myself. I still love with a stronger passion the things that child loved — the earth, the sky, the living things that do not speak, but know and mean so much more than we can think or even tell with all our living or dead languages.

There is a speech in the wind that we do not know, a heroism in Nature that we do not comprehend, some wisdom of beauty in the grass and the faintest flowers that bloom which we shall never achieve, a kind of fearless liberty to live to which we shall never attain with all our ideals and declarations of independence. We only believe that all men are created free and equal and entitled to the pursuit of happiness, but it is something we have never experienced because our minds constrain us. These verdant boughs have no mind, so they live in perfect liberty without our poor fears and transient knowledges. The seeds of the grass that is cut down and withers to-day will spring green above our

graves to-morrow with not one memory of pain or death. As a child, I could not have said what drew me to the earth, but it was this feeling of being closer there to life that neither fears nor perishes.

I am poorer in faith than that child was, but I still believe wearily in the same Providence in which she rejoiced. As she went silently about her affairs regardless, so have I gone on doing the thing I meant to do with a determination that will not be defeated. I made no appearance at this business, and do not now attract the least attention at working my will; only the thing accomplished is seen and read, not me. What I mean is that I am literally an unobtrusive person by nature. No one would recognize me except by name. I remember the same shyness as a child at being noticed. I have played my little tunes on the heart of the world, but I never craved to be identified by my strut with my works.

XLVII

FACTS AND TRUTHS

I LOVE truth, although I shall die hating mere facts, because they are misleading. They are the weapons and defense of literalists, strangely mean-minded people in my opinion who have caused much trouble and strife in the world. But I have the same happy talent the child I was had for prevaricating. Let me have some wisdom of the truth even if it is no larger than a mustard seed and the sensation inflates me. I cannot set it down in the little raw words of mere veracity. I must garnish it and spread it like a rainbow above my mind.

Some people would call this lying. I think they have done it, but I am not embarrassed or convinced. My notion is that it is a very precious kind of inebriation of the spirit. I remember lying myself into a state of happy intoxication as a child, even if I had to go out behind the house to do it where no one could hear me. I think this is one reason I live concealed behind so many hills now. The occasional excursions I make into the world bring me face to face with so many confusing and depressing facts which I cannot endure and cannot deny. Here, there is nothing to deny. All is an affirmation of the old order of things as in the beginning. It is only my mind that travels. Sometimes then I see visions of the future like Cassandra. But I try to be sensible

about this and remember that it is the weariness of the years which darkens the glass.

The world is not really whirling to destruction. It is we who are old and no longer able to keep pace with the times and who must pass away. Everything will go on as usual when we are out of it. And I shall not be scared up out of my grave, disheveled and demented by the din of some fearful battle going on above me. Such thoughts I do have for the moment, and am mastered by them as I used to be enchanted when I was young by a star-blossoming night. But presently I take a sort of recumbent comfort in the situation; nothing is really changed that should remain fixed by His almighty will — the same bright days, the same kind nights, the same seasons; only I have grown older.

As to facts, I have always been a faithful interpreter of the truth as my mind finds it; but I never have been able to stick to facts. In my opinion they are among the most misleading things we have to contend with in this present world. A fact is something somebody finds out about you that is not true, one of those capital-letter deeds you performed in a high mood or a low mood which is not characteristic of the man you really are. Personally, I had much rather be judged by the life I have lived than by the books I have written. In both places I have said things or done things that outrage the fact-tacking genius of critics. But on the whole I have come out very well.

My idea of Heaven is a place where there are no hard and fast facts of mortality sticking to us, but

we shall be what we really are, true hearts at last, easy to know and easier to believe, no reasons left to envy one another or to suspect one another. I have a faint impression that this may reduce mental activity among us beyond endurance, but I am willing to try it for a while.

I am not opposed to facts, you understand; but my point is that we attach too much importance to them as evidence. Facts make war; they are used by ambitious men and greedy men to sway the minds of people. Does any one believe now that there would have been any Great War if the common people who furnished the cannon fodder for it had known the real truth underlying the conflict? I doubt it.

I should like to get back to that honest feline normalcy of being just a woman with the ordinary exercise of my give-and-take disposition. I would spare more time for living instead of working. I wish above everything else to indulge more in inconsequential conversation about just pleasant things. What has become of all the natural, cheerful little topics we used to discuss? I rarely ever hear a conversation now that does not turn out for the worst instead of ending in a gale of laughter.

Am I wrong, or is there a note of sinister wisdom in laughter these days? Is there some dreadful quality in the knowledge we are getting which changes innocent merriment to cynical hysteria? I must be wrong about this; but when you live alone most of the time, and only go abroad occasionally in the world, you do notice things like that — the eyes of

people not so trustful of one another as I remember them long ago, a fearful wit, and that queer triumphant note in laughter like a comment indulged at the world's expense.

I am merely setting down my thoughts about all this as one thrusts out his hands in the dark and feels his way toward the door. What actually happens is that I spend most of my days alone here in this cabin with a companionable fire upon the hearth. Usually I get away with it; but if I am in a particularly keen mood, the illusion fails. I know it is only a bright combustion of heat and wood in the fireplace. No real sense to the crackling of these blazing logs. I read some, walk abroad with the dogs, and I have my usual look at the stars, as a poor lonesome shepherd may watch his flock a long way off and beyond his reach, but his sheep still. So are these stars mine. The heavens above this cabin are familiar to me like a garment I have worn a long time upon my heart.

But I have never seen an angel ascending or descending! That keeps one strained up too much — no respite from this business of believing what you cannot see with the naked eye. I am not denying that it is good for the soul, but sometimes I have wished for something that was just good for me.

XLVIII

BOOKS: MY OWN AND OTHERS

WHEN the harvests are in and all the summertime guests are gone and a crisper, cooler silence begins to blow through this valley, I settle down to a nine months' stretch of living alone here in the best company to be had. What I mean is that you can lay the book you are reading on the shelf without being obliged to think about what you will serve to the hero and heroine for dinner that evening. But after dinner you can take it up again and resume your companionship with the author and these characters which are frequently more interesting than real people, because they are derived from human nature at large and are the composites of many men and women. Also, there is the country in which they live, which may be on the other side of the world from where you live. So, sitting in your chair before your own fire, you enjoy all the benefits of travel without the inconvenience and confusion.

To read any one of Balzac's stories is like spending an evening in France, even if you have never been in France and cannot pronounce one single fluted word of that language. And to read Victor Hugo is like spending one half the evening among the sobbing stars and the other half of it amid scenes of the direst poverty made by the meanest minds.

Hugo was the dramatist of human emotions at their highest pitch and lowest ebb. He had the gift

of being vicariously sublime in a character like that of the old communist or Jean Valjean, but I doubt if he himself possessed the attributes of any kind of permanent character. I have the feeling that he was an irresponsible person with a histrionic conscience and practically no modesty of morals. Otherwise it is not clear to me how we can account for the serial romances of his own life, or his description of the Battle of Waterloo, or the fact that he took his morning ablutions in a glass bathroom on top of his house. The sun was, indeed, above him, but the populace was also in attendance in the streets below.

As for Balzac, he was a literary comedian who handled the tragedies of the human heart with a wit kin to the irony of fate. He could never have interpreted any other people but the French. He is peculiar to them, a medium through which the France of his day still lives, loves, sins, and suffers with a charm and a talent for indecency which it probably never had in reality. The art of a master is required to lift the squalor of the lowest lives and the grandeur of the noblest lives into imperishable scenes on paper, because in life they do change and fade into forgetfulness.

I recall one of his heroines, a stupid moron who could impart no animation to her immorality. He finds her reclining on a couch and spends ten thousand words describing her figure. I can spend a fascinating hour under that splendid spray of language, reading the mind and nature of the author. There is something idiotic in French genius of the

first water like the artless simplicity of a defective person going about with his clothing disarranged.

Before he has done making images of this woman she has ceased to exist except as a feminine mollusk of beauty. Then I am invariably moved to mirth by his efforts to get her off the couch and induce her to say something or do something bad enough or sufficiently entrancing to justify his description. Only an author who has struggled with a stubborn or stupid character in a story can appreciate his dilemma; and the fiasco when she finally sits up and sobs, with no visible explanation of the sob. The reader is left in suspense until the next chapter reveals the cause of her grief, which is not grief at all, but the French hysteria of passion. It is clear to the envious like me that he cannot bear to sacrifice one sentence of the marvelous description he has written of her and that she can never measure up to it in actual performance.

I remember having a similar experience years ago with one of my own heroines who turned out to be another kind of fool. Nothing was further from my expectations when I introduced her with a few complimentary sentences. I must have got the idea from an old valentine card. Anyway, she was standing beautifully gowned beside a tall fluted column on the veranda of a magnificent old Southern mansion. I managed to give the reader the impression that she was rich, handsome, thirty, not married and vaguely unhappy.

She stood regarding the gently rolling landscape with this expression, which was as far as my talents

as a struggling literary genius could carry her. I knew what would happen to her next day, but by no flight of my imagination could I fathom the thoughts that should be passing through her sad spinster mind at that moment. Neither could I move her from her gracefully leaning pose against the column. She became cataleptic. I labored with her frantically through three blistering hot summer days without ever persuading her to so much as turn her head.

Finally, in desperation, I sent her an anonymous note by a messenger couched in the language of a bold lover, saying that he would see her presently and settle a few old scores. She had run through with many lovers in her earlier youth, and could only perceive that the chirography of this note was vaguely familiar. It was a disgraceful thing to do, but the effect was electrical. From that time to the end of the story I have never had a more elastic heroine. Every author must have similar experiences, but very few of us would dare Balzac's insolence to the reader's intelligence and get by with the performance.

Certain books are more interesting to read than others in a place like this. There is nothing in the sublime propriety of these trees, the wide skies above and this earth so innocently green below to finance the erotic in fiction. It gives the impression of decadence artificially conceived in circumstances so old and decent.

Scott's novels go like a singing charm. So do Stevenson's stories. And it is the most pleasant

place imaginable to read Addison's papers. But not Christopher North's 'Noctes Ambrosianæ'; too much scholarly wit flashing between North and his brilliant companions in these ambrosial nights. My own experience is that, living alone with the stars by night and with the hills by day, the mind of the heavens and the earth overcome you and you cannot think of anything very smart or funny to say to yourself. I have never understood that great man who went off one summer, settled himself like a hermit in the midst of an immense landscape and wrote an essay on the 'Sense of Humor in Jesus.' That which always impressed me more about Jesus was his sense of man, who is the tragic figure in all creation.

The one book stimulating beyond all others in a place like this is the Bible. No matter how great a theologian a man may be, I doubt if he could come anywhere near comprehending the wisdom and the majesty of the thirty-eighth chapter of Job unless he has spent years in the wind and weather of a quiet place.

'Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

'Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou have understanding.'

Job makes no reply.

'Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

'Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?
or who laid the cornerstone thereof;

'When the morning stars sang together, and all
the sons of God shouted for joy?'

Job remains silent.

'Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake
forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?

'When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and
thick darkness a swaddling-band for it,

'And brake up for it my decreed place, and set
bars and doors,

'And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no fur-
ther: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?'

Job hangs his old gray head.

'Hast thou commanded the morning since thy
day; and caused the dayspring to know his place;

'That it might take hold of the ends of the
earth —'

When you consider that these are the unthinkable thoughts of the Almighty which must be delivered by the tongue of a mortal man and that the trace of his emotion and simplicity run through them like a weakness, it is amazing how near he caught the majesty and meaning of what he had to tell. Nothing ever written compares with the last five chapters of the Book of Job and the first five chapters of Genesis, and the authors of these books were the popular writers of their day. Compare their works with the works of modern poets, novelists, or historians. Let any modern scientist answer the questions the Lord put to Job, and observe how reduced in manner and substance his answers are. He gets

the stuff out of his mind, but these Scriptures were blown across creation to the minds of the men who recorded them. They have a roll and a rumble mortal intelligence can never impart, and they contain more hints of scientific truth than the wisest among us have found out, though they labor in that direction.

We are still wrinkling our noses and squinting through a telescope at Mars, disputing about that one little bright speck in the heavens. If this planet had been mentioned by a single prophet in the Bible, we should know more about it than the astronomers will ever find out, just as there is more information about creation as applied to this earth in Genesis than has ever been translated into the terms of science.

I have long since accepted the heavens and the earth as a part of my future scriptures and let it all go at that.

But what I am trying to do now is to indicate the way I have passed the time for so many years in this quiet place. One cannot work all the time, and I was never one of those worms that inhabit books written by others. If it is a particularly entrancing tale, I close the book and envy the author. I pace the floor and wring the neck of my spirit in grief because I shall never write anything as good. There are stacks of little ragged notebooks scattered in the dusty corners of this study which carry the record of these idle hours. Rarely ever a diary note in them of my own performances, but they contain studies of men and women.

At that hour of the evening when mother used to pick up her knitting and pass into a peaceful trance of industry, I reach for one of these headless blank books and write characters from memory. Maybe of one dead long since, but I recall her with a comprehension I never had when she was in the flesh. The copy she has left behind her is cleared of the fog which living casts over us. Or it is of one whom I never knew, but I have heard or read a news item concerning him which omits every personal detail. I piece him together as you construct a mastodon from the bones he left behind him. I have some grand portraits of the prophets made this way, intimate and terrible like the Scriptures they left behind them. Sometimes I get the whiff of a man's reputation, compare it with his deeds and deduce a character which is finer or worse than either the one or the other. After this it is easy to draw the features of his face, the length of his legs, the cut or sag of his eye. Presently I have a hero or a knave put together, respiration as good as Adam's, who may come in handy for copy.

There is one whom I always wanted to put into a tale, but could never set up a situation sufficiently noble and stupid to contain him. He is old now and coming to his end; but in the days when I knew him he was a great man who had no manner or sensibility about achieving greatness — homely, with what you might call a country-town smile, which is an expression of facial simplicity. He had a splendid figure and wore his clothes as if he hated clothes. He walked as if he were stepping over dead bodies.

I do not know why, because he was by nature singularly merciful. He worked indefatigably and rose to the top of his profession without distinction.

This vicious stride he had was an offense his fellow men would not forgive. His unpopularity was cumulative. He did not need to boast to get it; he had only to be seen striding along the street to his office, down the aisle of a church, or even as a pall-bearer at a funeral, to add fury to these flames that never consumed him. He loved music and had no talent for it, but he always kept mute musical instruments in his house, as some people keep a Bible on the center table which they do not read. He loved learning and had no learning, but he had the finest private library in the city; not to show his friends, because he had no friends, but probably by way of brushing shoulders with poets, philosophers, and historians.

The queer thing was that he read these books, as you perform a wearying task. Every evening for twenty years he would sit down in this library, cross his legs, lean back like a tired man and get through as many pages of a volume as he could endure before bedtime. He never referred to this prodigious labor, and no one ever heard him quote an opinion or passage from one of these books. He made his own opinions and maintained them without citing authorities to uphold them.

I seem to have filled a notebook with speculations half touching, half humorous, on the character of this man; but it appears from the record that I could not determine whether he formed this habit of reading as a lonely person sometimes plays solitaire

to pass the time, or whether it was a terrific duty he performed toward himself. In any case, I record the sequel. He finally simmered down to silence and fishing. His conscience was clear. He had read every volume in that populous library and now reads no more.

Follows a very good paragraph on the quality of valor peculiar to noble stupidity. It shows up cleaner than the makeshift courage of smarter people. But I must have been by this man as Lundy used to be by the great textbook he would write for teaching Greek. He had the idea, as entrancing as any fiction could be, but he did not write the book. Such a romance of the rudiments of a language was really beyond any man to achieve. Just so, you will not find a trace of this valorous dunce so carefully thought out in any story I have written. Evidently I could not find the deeds to dramatize him.

Many writers probably practice their art in this manner, as those of us who are not writers practice the oral art of gossiping. I have sometimes wondered if an author's sketchbook might not read better than an artist's sketchbook looks. But it is unusual to be reduced to talking to yourself with a pen about people whom you have actually known or suspected by way of entertainment.

XLIX

CHANGE AND CONFUSION

I SUPPOSE the shortening of human life is really a blessing. This may be why so many men and women look forward to immortal life. That would not only involve an incredible change of scenes but of conditions. We should be relieved of both our virtues and vices, and that wearing monitor inside, conscience; of appetites, indigestion and every other vicissitude of the mortal mind and the mortal body. Certainly we do tire of any existence we work out for ourselves if we keep an active mind, because the mind no less than the spirit of man is migratory. So he migrates, or endures all the hardships of a sabbatical year, or he changes his business, or he retires from business. The point is that we are made so that we cannot stay put, as the saying goes, without disintegrating.

Lately I have contemplated the adventure of sailing forth into the world as one goes to meet a good old comrade. But the more I think about it, the more it seems to me that I might meet a stranger not suitable to my years or habits of thought. The mind and character of the world I knew has changed.

When I left it in 1912 to take up my residence in this valley, nearly as many people in Nashville attended prayer meeting on Wednesday night as went to the theater on other evenings. Now prayer meetings are about to become obsolete. A popular preacher was a good pastor, but never the sensational

feature of the Sunday morning paper. The Methodist Church had not lifted the ban on worldly amusements, and we had only a few earthly amusements, like playing flinch and croquet. As a Church, it was lenient toward penitents on principle, but not nearly so lenient as it is now toward the world. Nobody would have dreamed of putting on a drive for seventy-five million dollars for Christian education. The price of salvation and education have advanced more than worldly luxuries since then.

Women were still in hot pursuit of culture if they were particularly worldly minded. Otherwise they were the hand-maidens of the Lord as usual. Polite social gambling was limited to a very small set, and was not recognized as a respectable diversion. Now these same women are citizens, politicians, and reformers. They have the same brains, the same natures, the same nervous systems they have always had, which are differently tempered from those of men; but they are running neck and neck now with men in civic virtue and public service. Even more of them are testing out these vices which formerly were supposed to be peculiar to men. They are much more easily deceived by their own emotions and by the flattery of politicians than the simplest maidens ever were by the eloquence of false lovers. I suppose when they realize that they have caught the bull by the horns they will retire from public life, go home and pay more attention to their yearling sons and daughters. Right now it seems to me that there are too many delinquent mothers broadcasting noble thoughts as mere citizens.

I shrink like a criminal from a nearer approach to these women. I have neither the rostrum mind nor the qualities of courage suitable for bearing banners in a parade. I must vote because it is my duty now to do so, but this is taxing to my moral nature on account of the character of the candidates put up. When it comes to choosing a politician for office I am a conscientious objector. I am an impractical Democrat who would prefer to vote for a Republican if he proved more nearly competent. I have barely sense enough not to follow my conscience in this matter and must always keep out of the way or stand among more valiant women a cubit short of the correct political stature. This keeps me silent when I should like to write a few pertinent political paragraphs for publication, especially before elections.

Crime has become an intellectual pursuit and a profitable profession these latter years. Formerly only rascals and defectives became criminals; now learned men and youngsters choose criminal careers. The youths are criminally insane because they have not received the training and discipline necessary to insure moral sanity. The passing of parents is a tragic circumstance. Formerly they exercised control and commanded obedience of their children. Now they do not. I know many families where the elder sons and daughters were brought up, you may say, under the old dispensation of parental authority, while the younger ones have grown up under the new order since the spirit of the times has changed. They matriculate into the streets, then into an adven-

turous school life, and finally into the universities, where they are provided with funds and speed facilities that would turn the head of a wise man, besides being made subjects for intellectual experiments by professors who have theories to prove.

The contrast between the characters of the older and younger sons and daughters in these families is frightfully significant. The first are morally sane, the others are not. Even if they commit no crimes, they practice a license in conduct and thinking which leads to the disruption of society.

This is the reason why the defense of these young criminals depends upon the testimony of alienists rather than upon the evidence of witnesses to their crime. They have managed in this sentimental age to struggle beyond the control of parents and beyond the reach of judges and juries. They are voluntary moral idiots with intellectual leanings toward every vice. My feeling is that we wait too long to send for the alienist. One should be employed to visit these boys and girls like any other health officer, so that we may be warned in time of sprouting criminals.

Somewhere in this confusion men and women are passing out into the light of great achievements. Maybe the time will come when the science of medicine will have advanced so far inoculation will take the place of morals in eradicating the physical effects of vice. But to what end? Nature is a better economist. She condemns the depraved to death. Disease is her quarantine method against every excess. Maybe in time we shall have more and more machinery to do the work of the world. Machines will

not strike or join a labor union, but neither will they work without a man's brain and aid to guide them. In any case, what is to become of the surplus man power?

This is not a happy moment in the world's history. Never was there such a smoke screen between us and the future. I have a great wish to travel out there, at least to the edge of it, not as a tourist, but as a tired pilgrim who has come a long way in bad weather lifts his eyes and sees through the darkness a light shining, the open door of a house warm with peace and kindness. I want again at the very last the faith and hopes with which I started life. I remember that feeling, a sort of winged lightness of the heart. But I may never find the way. Something seems to be turning to ashes on my lips; not this valley or the scenes I have laid in it for happiness, but it is because I have no power of happiness now in me.

L

CAN WE BE HAPPY?

AT the risk of offending many people, but with the hope of helping a few who are making the same mistake, I am venturing at the very end of the record to set down the only explanation that occurs to me: I believe I have totally misunderstood the Scriptures by which I was guided during the formative years of my life. I had in the beginning a natural gift for the simplest, most innocent happiness. I needed no more than a bright day and a long path winding across the hills and through the fields. I had a mind which retained the lacy shadows leaves made upon the ground. Now I seem to have lost the will to take these little idle paths to peace and happiness. I could weep sometimes when at this season of the year the wind blows a shower of yellow elm leaves twinkling like gold high in the sunlight because I can only see them. I do not feel the loveliness of the sight.

The reason is that I have spent my life and strength in service and sacrifice according to the way the Scriptures have been heaped upon me by preachers and my own dear saint who died a martyr's death to such teachings. If I had had the courage to interpret them according to my own good senses, provided especially by the Lord for that purpose, I should have known the doctrines precisely as He promises.

How many sermons I have heard from this text, 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' but not one preacher ever interpreted them to mean, 'Do not bear the other fellow's burden unless he will bear one of yours.' Therefore this bearing of other people's burdens has contributed more to damnable selfishness in this world than any other Christian virtue. Here is another one, 'Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

I got the right cue on that one long ago. When Lundy was in mortal need of some earthly blessing, I used to go out and seek it with both hands and knock on every door until the right one opened to him. But I lacked the time and sense to practice the same wisdom for myself. I have earned more than I deserve, Heaven knows, but I have not sought sensibly the little things I needed for happiness. I have wasted too much of my time for others, without having the spiritual gumption to ask them to pay it back. There is no telling how much moral damage I have done in this world practicing the religion I have been taught, which I now know was a puerile and spiritually illiterate interpretation of the Scriptures. I have had my share of blame in making whimpering parasites of honest people in the name of the Lord. It was blasphemous, and my hope for forgiveness is repentance and a determination to reform.

I shall never be able to face what remains of the future properly without weaning myself of this inglorious and sentimentally spiritual past. Therefore I must change my scenes, as a bad man some-

times goes off to escape the temptation of evil companions. At the present moment I am in bondage to all manner of charitable habits and false obligations which would read like the calendar of a saint's deeds if I should set them down here, but they are really the tax I pay upon a wrong interpretation of the Christian life.

This is what I have discovered — that there is no way to satisfy a sentimental conscience. It is the thief in your breast. The more you give, the more will it urge you to give; the more you sacrifice, the greater sacrifices will it demand of you. I am determined to stop gratifying my conscience. I am far more honorable and sensible than it is. I shall be guided by my sense. And that points directly to casting off every weight that besets me and looking about for the fair weather of happier days.

My idea is to prove the Scriptures by seeking and finding happiness. I am late starting off on this adventure, and I have no very definite idea about the direction in which happiness lies, but that very uncertainty has a sort of sparkle in it. My feeling now is that I shall need only to get away from my dreadful past to find it changing me to some easier goodness of mind, a place where I can sit down and not be responsible for anything or anybody, where I shall feel light on my feet and ready to travel a long way in bright silence to another country. Sometimes it seems to me that I may be thinking of the kingdom of Heaven.

We do grow up at last somewhere, but not in this present world. We invariably pass out of it trying

to add another cubit to our stature, topping it off with a poor little deed of no importance to any one but ourselves. I doubt if any man or woman, however old, is really ready to give up his ghost. There is something he had not time to say or to finish before this chill came on and this shortening of the breath. Maybe it is a blessed illusion with which we instinctively finance our feeling of worth and importance when we are no longer of any worth or importance, but I do not think so. My idea is that it may be a sort of a dull intimation of immortality, a feeling of incompleteness, as if there must be much more life in which to finish up things; not the things we started here, but other cubits to be added later. I have always thought of saints as being exceedingly tall spirits, probably a trifle top-heavy as to their countenances.

As I have grown older I am more and more convinced that I have not grown up, that my powers have not come to me, not my real wisdom to do and achieve the right thoughts. I lack some dear grace. I cannot seem to steady down and get the single eye. There is a curriculum in living which I have not studied. This may be happiness. I want to know it; I should feel better prepared for immortality. I do not wish to arrive fagged at last and a bit slipshod in the spirit, as if I had a hard time all my mortal life. It is not complimentary to God. I wish to come up before His face in a high mood as if I had tasted all His benefits. I wish to be clothed in the bright garments of my human happiness, more colorful than the glistening white robes of the merely redeemed.

I have an intimate feeling of God that this is a bright idea, and that at least it is permitted one may seek happiness even if at last he must sink into the defeat of mere peace.

THE END

